

Reflection for the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 4, 2021

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Remember Nazareth

Today's Gospel for the 14th Sunday in Ordinary time (Mark 6:1-6) offers much for our reflection on the fickleness of human acceptance. The Gospel scene depicts Jesus, now an accomplished preacher, healer, and teacher returning to his home, and on the Sabbath, assuming a teaching role in the synagogue. Jesus' listeners are astonished by his wisdom and "mighty deeds." However, Jesus' wisdom becomes a threat and an irritant, and their initial astonishment turns to rejection.

Jesus' listeners publicly point out that wisdom is inconsistent with Jesus' background. He is a carpenter and is the son of Mary. They insult the Teacher—who is one of them—by suggesting that as a carpenter (not an artisan) Jesus is definitely at a lower societal station than a person of wisdom and, as the son of a woman, they suggest that they are not sure about his earthly father. In Jesus' world there is no more painful insult than to disrespect a son's father. For Jesus, called by his Father to build the kingdom of heaven by preaching, teaching, healing in moments like his appearance in the synagogue, the lack of faith of his own native community was an even more painful insult. "He was not able to perform any mighty deeds there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hand on them." (v.5)

As believers who live by the example of Jesus Christ, we have the power to attract, inspire and instruct others in accepting Jesus and adopting a Christian lifestyle. We have a role as teachers and evangelizers to carry on the mission of Jesus Christ. We are to assume our role in public places and to speak the truth and values of God our Father. Surely, we can expect to be a threat to the status quo and also expect rejection. However, the opposition of those who espouse secular values and lifestyles should not deter us from accepting the blessings and graces afforded to us for our work of evangelization. When the going gets tough, we need to remember the community at Nazareth and how it did not benefit from Christ's saving work. If we back down from speaking the truth of Gospel values, our community will be just another Nazareth.