

Commentary on the Gospel: God Can Enter "our Nazareth"

Gospel for the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B), and commentary.

Gospel (*Mk 6:1-6*)

Jesus went away from there and came to his own country; and his disciples followed him. And on the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty

works are wrought by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?”

And they took offense at him. And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.”

And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief.

Commentary

Some time has now gone by since Jesus began his preaching. He decides that the moment has come to visit Nazareth. Jesus arrives with his

disciples and makes himself known to the people of his town as the new Teacher. It is easy to imagine the expectation that the arrival of Mary's son would have given rise to there.

Saint Mark's description of this scene is quite brief. He tells us that the people were greatly surprised at Jesus' words. But their surprise doesn't lead them to open themselves to the truth, but rather to doubt it. The listeners cannot accept that this young man whom they had seen grow up in their town, working in a humble job and living in such a normal family, could be capable of such lofty teachings. Sadly, their heart is closed to the joy of the Gospel.

Perhaps they were so accustomed to their daily life and routines in their small town that they were unable to accept that something great could take place there. How could God

have entered into this family that they knew so well, whose daily life involved such ordinary tasks as cooking, cleaning the shop, going to the well for water, etc. Nazareth to them seems too small a place for God.

In contrast to Jesus' neighbors, we believe that our Lord can enter into "our own Nazareth." Jesus' life can grow in those spaces we know so well, in the corners of our homes, in the streets we walk along each day. When we work out of love, seeking to serve God and others, we enable Christ to grow in us.

Not everyone who saw Jesus growing up was so incredulous as those described in today's Gospel. Close beside our Lady, Saint Joseph had been filled with noble admiration during the years he lived alongside Jesus. As Saint Josemaria said: "Joseph is surprised and astonished.

God gradually reveals his plans to him, and he tries to understand them. As with every soul who wishes to follow Jesus closely, he soon discovers that here is no laggard's pace, no room for routine ... Saint Joseph, more than anyone else before or since, learned from Jesus to be alert to recognize God's wonders, to have his mind and heart awake."[1]

[1] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 54.

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