

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

GOSPEL

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Jesus went to his home town and his disciples accompanied him. With the coming of the sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue and most of them were astonished when they heard him. They said, 'Where did the man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been granted him, and these miracles that are worked through him? This is the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joset and Jude and Simon? His sisters, too, are they not here with us?' And they would not accept him. And Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is only despised in his own country, among his own relations and in his own house'; and he could work no miracle there, though he cured a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

(Mark 6:1-6)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- There is great debate about the relationship of 'the brothers of the Lord' to Jesus. Some scholars suggest that they were in fact literal brothers (or half-brothers or step-brothers), while other scholars point out that it was common practice to refer to cousins and even more distant relations as 'brothers'. The Catholic Church holds that Jesus was the only child of Mary, the virgin mother of Christ.
- The reference to Jesus as 'son of Mary' was a slur on his legitimacy because, in Jesus' time, people were usually identified as the child of their father.
- The man referred to here as 'James, the brother of the Lord' later became the leader of the Church in Jerusalem.

EXPLORING THE WORD

The questions asked by the townspeople of Nazareth are interesting ones. They rightly seek to understand the origins of Jesus' wisdom and power. 'Where did the man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been granted him, and these miracles that are worked through him?' They recognise that Jesus is not the source of his own authority. There is a greater power behind him. Their failure lies in the fact that they do not recognise the source of Jesus' power and authority. They do not see the presence of God in the words and deeds of their compatriot. Indeed, Jesus is designated as 'son of Mary', a slur on them both at a time when one's genealogy was traced through the line of the father. Jesus is astonished by the inability of the townspeople to look beyond what they are familiar with to the obvious signs of the kingdom of God in his actions and words. The kingdom of God requires the cooperation of people if it is to become a reality. He can do nothing there!

- Are there times when you close your eyes to the presence of God in the ordinary things of life?
- How does recognising your own blindness make you more open to the presence of God around you?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What are the things that prevent your faith from taking root or growing?
- Recall times when you have felt rejected or scorned. What were your feelings at those times? What was it that caused your rejection? How did you deal with this?
- Have there been occasions when you have acted as the 'prophet'? How were you received?
- This week, try to become aware of those things which hinder your growth in faith. Work actively in overcoming them.
- Ponder the mystery contained in these phrases from the gospel this week:

Where did the man get all this?

What is this wisdom that has been granted him?

