

**SPIRITUALITY**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

cf. Luke 4:18

R<sup>1</sup>. Alleluia, alleluia.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

for he sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor.

R<sup>2</sup>. Alleluia, alleluia.

**Gospel**

Mark 6:1-6a; L101B

**Jesus departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples.**

**When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished.**

**They said, "Where did this man get all this?"**

**What kind of wisdom has been given him?**

**What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands!**

**Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary,**

**and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?**

**And are not his sisters here with us?"**

**And they took offense at him.**

**Jesus said to them,**

**"A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house."**

**So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there,**

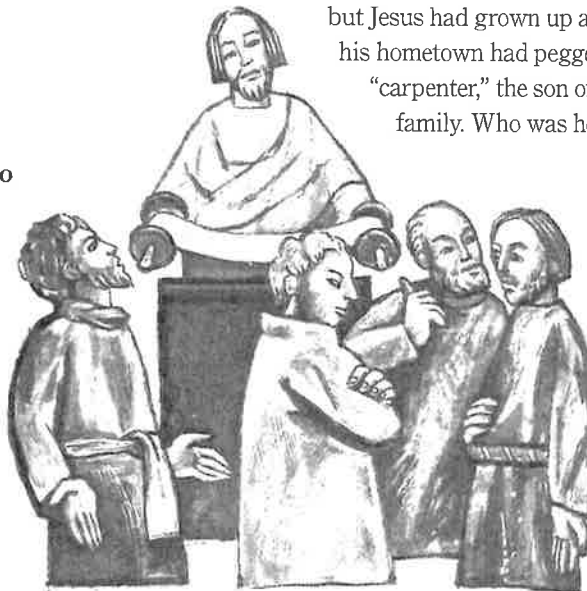
**apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them.**

**He was amazed at their lack of faith.**

**Reflecting on the Gospel**

Have you ever been so familiar with someone that you knew what he would say in a given situation? Or have you ever known someone so well that you could predict her behavior? That's how well Jesus' townspeople and family thought they knew him. So, after Jesus had been away for some time performing his ministry, he returned to his hometown and faced the shock and surprise of those who thought they knew him.

The townspeople knew him from the time he was a little boy, but Jesus had grown up and become his own person. Those from his hometown had pegged him, put him in a box. He was the "carpenter," the son of Mary. They knew him and knew his family. Who was he to teach them?



In response, Jesus refers to himself as a prophet without honor in his own country, town, and even in his own house. Here too, like earlier stories in Mark, we have an indication of the situation in the Markan community. Jesus is without honor in his own house as many of the early Christians were likely without honor in their own house. As Jesus was rejected by those who knew him, many of the early Christians were likely rejected by those who knew them.

We are reminded of the adage, "familiarity breeds contempt." Those who were closest to Jesus for most of his life did not see him for who he was but for who they determined him to be.

As a result, he could do no mighty work there except a few minor healings! The Markan Jesus is in some ways dependent upon a faith response to perform mighty works. This is a reciprocal relationship with the believer. Of course, later gospels will, for the most part, modify that understanding so that Jesus' power is dependent upon nothing but his own will and that of God. But in this early gospel we hear something of the resistance Jesus faced and the resulting limitation in his ability to perform mighty works. Jesus was amazed at their unbelief. Their own limited understanding and their inability to perceive who he was limited the works he was able to perform.

**Living the Paschal Mystery**

Today most of us are not in danger of being too familiar with Jesus the way those from his hometown were. We are not dismissive of the carpenter who was the son of Mary. But we can be effectively blind to the presence of Jesus in our midst in the modern world. We can be dismissive of those we confine to the margins of society. Who is that? A homeless person? A beggar? An immigrant? Or an undocumented person? What does that person know that we don't already know? What wisdom could that person have that we don't already possess?

There is a temptation in the religious realm and even societal realm to believe we have what we need to be complete and whole. There is little another person, especially one on the margins, could teach us about how to act, how to behave,

or anything about God. That is precisely how the Nazarenes behaved with respect to Jesus. They thought they understood who he was. They knew his family, his backstory. What more did they need to know? In their minds, this upstart was too big for his britches. They took offense at him. Yet, God was effectively in their midst.

May we be open to finding the new, the unexpected, in familiarity. Let us not grow too familiar that we fail to see the presence of God in our midst.

**Focusing the Gospel**

*Mark 6:1-6*

Mark begins a new theme in his gospel with today’s reading that will be central to his story of Jesus: the obtuseness of people to the power and authority of Jesus. The people of Jesus’ own hometown reject his message. They consider Jesus too much “one of them” to be taken seriously. They are too obsessed with superficialities—occupation, ancestry, origins—to realize the presence of God in their midst and to allow themselves to be affected by that presence.

Jesus redefines the meaning of authority as understood by his kinfolk: Jesus’ authority is not derived from his ability to manipulate the fears, suspicions, apathy, or ignorance of those around him but from the spirit of mercy, justice, and compassion that he is able to call forth from them. The authority his hearers see in Jesus is rooted in wisdom that comes from experience and a lived commitment to act justly and selflessly.

**Focusing the First Reading**

*Ezek 2:2-5*

Ezekiel is called by God to speak his word to his own people: Judean Jews who have been repatriated from their beloved Jerusalem to Babylon. God warns the prophet that his work will be very difficult: God is sending him to speak to a defeated, distrusted people who feel abandoned by God and will be immediately hostile to anyone who claims to speak for the God they have “rebelled against.”

**Focusing the Responsorial Psalm**

*Ps 123:1-2, 2, 3-4 (2cd)*

The master-slave relationship is the central image of Psalm 123. In ancient Near Eastern cultures, a master was responsible for providing for the slave; in return, the slave could be trusted for managing the property of the master. The psalmist seeks God (the master) to act on behalf of his servants (the slaves) who have been exiled and impoverished by their Babylonian captors.

**Focusing the Second Reading**

*2 Cor 12:7-10*

The Corinthian church had been divided by members allying themselves with other “apostles.” The splintering of the community at Corinth has been a source of great sorrow for Paul, who had reminded them that unity is to be had in Christ. In the final section of this series of Sunday readings from his two letters to the Corinthians, Paul reflects on some of his most difficult challenges: not to grow conceited, to discover strength in weakness, and to experience God’s grace in times of hardship.

**PROMPTS FOR HOMILISTS, CATECHISTS, AND RCIA TEAMS**

Who are the “authorities” in your life whom you look up to and pay attention to?

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Have you ever known someone who possessed the courageous, unwavering faith of a “prophet”?

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When have you been “offended” by someone who spoke about a moral or ethical issue?

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In what situations or set of circumstances has it been most difficult for you to live your faith?

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