

**Homily – Mark 6: 1-6**  
**14<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B**  
**04<sup>th</sup> July, 2021**

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Once upon a time, a travelling circus was staying on the outskirts of a village. One evening, shortly before the show time, a fire broke out. The manager sent the clown, who was already dressed up for his act into the nearby village for help. There was a danger too that the fire would spread across the fields of dry stubble and burn the village itself.

The clown hurried into the village. And, he asked the people to come out as quickly as possible to the blazing circus. But the people only laughed at him. They thought it was a brilliant piece of advertising on the part of the management. “What a clever stunt to get the people to go to the circus”, they said. They even applauded the clown and nearly broke their sides laughing at his attempts to look serious and worried. He tried his best to make them understand that it was no trick, that there really was a fire. But, the harder he tried, the more they laughed. Finally, the fire did reach the village and burned it to a cinder. They did not listen to him, because for them he was just a clown. And this made it virtually impossible for them to examine the truth.

Something similar happened to Jesus when He returned to His native village and to His own people. Even though they were astonished by His wisdom and amazed at the way He performed miracles, they could not get beyond their own assumptions about Him. They were certain that they knew who He was. “Isn’t this the carpenter’s Son?”, they said. “Don’t we know His Mother Mary, His extended family and where He comes from?” And they would not accept Him. In their eyes His ordinariness cancels out His wisdom and His miracles. Perhaps it was easier for them to accept a carpenter than a prophet in their midst.

Anthony De Mello, also known as Tony Demello, an Indian Jesuit priest and psychotherapist who died in 1987 narrates the following story in his book, *The Song of the Bird* which actually illustrates poignantly the irony contained in today’s Gospel.

**Nasruddin** earned his living selling eggs. Someone came to his shop one day and said, “Guess what I have in my hand.” “Give me a clue,” said **Nasruddin**. “I shall give you several: It has the shape of an egg, and the size of an egg. It looks like an egg, tastes like an egg, and smells like an egg. Inside it is yellow and white. It is liquid before it is cooked, becomes thick when heated.

It was, moreover, laid by a hen.” “Aha! I know!” said *Nasruddin*. “It is some sort of cake!”

Well, it is ironic. The expert misses the obvious. And here, it was also an irony that the neighbors of Jesus of Nazareth missed the obvious, for they thought they knew every detail about “the carpenter’s son.” In pretending to have complete knowledge of Jesus’ personal data, they ended up showing their ignorance. Their knowledge of “*the carpenter, the son of Mary*” was superficial. Their prejudice prevented them from believing and responding to the Christ, the Son of God.

Yes! Many people of Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth did not accept Him as a prophet because they “knew” Jesus and His family too well. They knew Jesus as a carpenter with no schooling in Mosaic Law and knew that this “son of the carpenter” could not be the promised Messiah who would come from Bethlehem as a descendant of David’s royal family. Besides, they were angry when Jesus not only did not work any miracles in Nazareth but chided them with prophetic courage for their lack of Faith, then left them, to proclaim God’s message, through a preaching, healing ministry to those who would receive it and believe.

Sometimes, we reject people looking at their external appearances. And often times, we think we know everything about others; but our prejudices, assumptions and biases prevent us from seeing new depths within them. And so, we're not open to letting them surprise us any-more.

The story of Jesus' rejection by fellow-townsmen in Nazareth is a story that we can identify with because it is a story that has happened to most of us. We might have experienced the pain of rejection caused by hurts, wounds, betrayal, divorce, abandonment, violated trust, trauma, neglect, or abuse in its various forms. What about rejection by those closest to us? Often our friends, families, or childhood companions fail to listen to, and refuse to accept, the words of grace, love and encouragement that we offer to them, because they are so familiar with us as we were that they are unable to see us as God's appointed instruments, the agents of God's healing and saving grace.

I think, we need to check also the other side of the coin. How often do we discount God's agents through prejudice? How often do we fail to see God's image in them because of our own hardheartedness? Well, we must realize that God's power is always available to transform even the most unlikely people.

Several years ago, “Laurence J Peter”, wrote a book about the inefficiency in the business world. He called it **The Peter Principle**. He sent the manuscript to one of the major publishing houses and it was rejected as having no commercial value whatsoever. Peter tried again with another company and then another until he had 30 rejections. But he kept trying and finally, a publisher accepted the manuscript, and the book was sold over 8 million copies.

Peter’s experience has been repeated over and over again in history. And, when faced with rejection, many of them never gave up because they knew they were right and really didn’t care about what others thought of them.

Now the question is: “are we prepared to be rejected when we speak the truth?” Jesus taught us to give respect and freedom to others, without condoning or encouraging sinful behavior. Let us then during this Mass pray that we may have the strength, the courage and the perseverance to speak the truth guided by Gospel values, and never to be let down by rejections. God bless you all, **Amen**.

