

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD  
IN THE  
CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY  
14th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
July 7, 2024**

**SCRIPTURES:**

<b>Ezekiel 2:2-5</b>	Let us not be obstinate of heart.
<b>2 Corinthians 12: 7-10</b>	In our weakness only God is powerful.
<b>Mark 6:1-6</b>	Jesus is rejected even by his own.

**SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:**

**Ezekiel:**

Ezekiel was a priest of the Temple in Jerusalem. Now, there is no more Temple, no more priesthood; the people are in exile in Babylon. God chooses Ezekiel to speak the power-filled word to the people. God will be present to the people in a new way: God’s “Spirit” will enter the prophet and speak the word of God’s power to the people. Whether or not the people listen, God’s word possesses inherent power. “Son of Man” is an expression of emphasis (“Really a Man!”). Most likely, in this context, it is used to distinguish between God and the prophet (“I am God; you are a man.”).

**Corinthians:**

Chapters 10-13 in this letter are dramatically different from the first nine chapters. Here, Paul writes “out of much distress.” He defends himself against the many challenges to his authority as an apostle. Authority does not mean power. He does not have much of worldly power, but he claims spiritual authority conferred on him by Christ. The “thorn in the flesh” continues to puzzle scholars: physical illness? Emotional distress? Opposition from Jewish Christians? We do not know the answer. What we do know is that God uses that weakness to show his power working through Paul.

**Mark:**

In Mark’s Gospel, the rejection of Jesus and of his mission by the Pharisees, by his townspeople, and by his very family, becomes a paradigm of the disciples’ own lack of faith in Jesus as Lord and Messiah. The disciples of Jesus at the time of Mark’s writing, and the disciples of Jesus today, hear this same message and know that they are being addressed, too, as rejecting Jesus. In Mark, it is always those who should be the first to accept Jesus who end up being the first to reject or deny him.

Disciples are slow to understand and to accept Jesus. The religious authorities in Judea do no better. Those who accept Jesus are most often the outcasts of society and of religion, those we would not expect. They have more to gain, apparently.

Jesus is called a prophet, as was John the Baptist. A prophet is someone who speaks for God. Without faith, the people cannot hear the message of salvation. Miracles alone do not produce salvation. Only when miracles arouse a response of faith can the saving message, or the Gospel, be heard with effect. We are not saved by apparitions of the Blessed Mother nor even of the Sacred

Heart of Jesus. We are saved by our response to Jesus Christ who is Lord and Savior. The Gentiles will be portrayed as receiving the Good News whereas the Jewish people, hometown people, and immediate disciples shut themselves out. They have other preoccupations. They have their own perceptions of what is important in their lives. The Gentiles have everything to gain by turning to Jesus. Up to now, they have not been included in God's saving mercy. In Jesus Christ, they will have access to the throne of grace. It is those who already thought they had that access who will find themselves left out.

As Church, we, too, will be rejected by those who are closest to us at times, Familiarity will sometimes lead to contempt. Rejection of Jesus and of his Church should not come from the obstacles that we place in the way. Rigid attitudes on the part of Church persons have often caused people to turn away. The Gospel in all its simplicity, along with all of its challenges, must be placed squarely before people. Then, they will have a choice. We cannot make converts by watering down the message. Those do not last. But, we cannot be more demanding than Jesus, either!

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Our ability to hear God's voice speaking to us will depend on our willingness to make the changes God will want in our lives (conversion). Share some experience of a time you may have delayed listening to God because you were not yet ready to change. What is it that stood in your way? What were you not yet ready to surrender into God's hands? How did the change (conversion) come about? How did you become ready?

2. List some of the reason why the people of Nazareth were not willing to hear Jesus. What are some of the reasons we are sometimes not willing? Have we become so used to Jesus that we do not take him seriously anymore? Have we become so familiar with one another in the Church that we do not see the face of Jesus in each other's lives? How can we change that? What must we do to take the Church seriously again?

3. Perhaps we do not listen to those we know because they also know us and our shortcomings. How would this apply in a family or in a parish situation? Are there any real prophets, who truly speak God's word, whom we dismiss because we know their human failings? We fail to get close to Church teachers because we fear they will know our weaknesses and our failings. How can we come to be more self-revealing?

## **PRAYER**

**Lord, free us from sin  
and bring us to the joy  
that lasts forever.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

## **CATHOLIC DOCTRINE**

The Scriptures today speak to the Catholic community concerning one of our most fundamental beliefs and teachings: namely, that in the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth there is revealed to us the divine being of God himself. The human Jesus became the medium, the means by which God gave himself to our world. The concrete, visible humanity of Jesus became the "sacrament" of God,

delivering the “unseen through that which is seen.” God who is essentially invisible to the human eye became visible in the human nature of Jesus. The unseen made visible through that which can be seen.

The Catholic tradition has firmly held to the proposition that God uses the material things of creation to communicate the spiritual realities of the divine realm. The incarnation of the Son of God in the flesh of the Man of Nazareth is so very real that the human Jesus deserves to be adored as equal to God himself. The flesh has become so consecrated in Jesus that it is elevated to the realm of God himself

All creation declares the glory of God. All created things are signs of the might and majesty and beauty of God. Creation not only images the Creator but becomes a means through which we have access to the Creator.

Some Christians reject this insight and this doctrine. For them, the world is so sinful that it can never be an appropriate vehicle for God’s self-revelation. Only the humanity of Jesus is adequate as the “sacrament” of God; no other created thing, human or material, is good enough to be used by God to communicate God’s love. For them, sacraments are not really channels of God’s grace but only pale reflections of God’s work.

The Catholic doctrine of transformation by grace leads us to assert that nature is holy in itself; that the human person redeemed by the blood of Christ can be an effective means of transmitting God’s love to others. Christ is the “sacrament of God;” the Church is the “sacrament of Christ.” In the Church, the sacraments are truly signs and channels of God’s redeeming grace.

**The Catechism: # 774, 1088**

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