



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square

Sunday, 8 July 2018

Multimedia

Dear Brothers and Sisters Good Morning!

Today's Gospel passage (cf. Mk 6:1-6) narrates the story of when Jesus returns to Nazareth and begins to teach in the synagogue on a Saturday. Ever since he had left it and begun preaching in the nearby hamlets and villages, he had never again set foot in his country. He has returned. Therefore, the whole town must have been there to listen to this son of theirs, whose fame as a wise master and powerful healer had by now spread throughout Galilee and beyond. But what could have stood out as a success, turned into a resounding rejection, to such an extent that Jesus could not perform any mighty work but only a few healings (cf. v. 5). The dynamics of that day are reconstructed in detail by Mark, the Evangelist: At first the people of Nazareth listen [to him] and are astonished; then perplexed, they ask themselves "Where did this man get all this?", this wisdom? and in the end they take offence, recognizing him as the carpenter, Mary's son whom they had seen grow up (cf v. 2-3). Thus Jesus sums it up with the expression which has become proverbial: "A prophet is not without honours, except in his own country" (v. 4).

We may ask ourselves: why do Jesus' fellow townsmen go from astonishment to disbelief? They make a comparison between Jesus' humble origins and his current abilities: he is a carpenter; he did not study and yet he preaches better than the scribes and he performs miracles. And instead of opening up to the reality, they take offence. According to the people of Nazareth, God is too great to humble himself to speak through such a simple man! It is the scandal of the Incarnation: the unsettling event of a God made flesh who thinks with the mind of a man, works and acts with the hands of a man, loves with a human heart, a God who struggles, eats and sleeps like one of

us. The Son of God overturns every human framework: it is not the disciples who washed the feet of the Lord, but it is the Lord who washed the feet of the disciples (cf. Jn 13:1-20). This is a reason for scandal and incredulity, not only in that period, but in all ages, even today.

The radical change Jesus brought about commits his disciples of both yesterday and today to a personal and community [self] examination. Indeed, even in our day it can happen that we harbour some prejudices that prevent us from seeing reality. But, today, the Lord asks us to adopt an attitude of humble listening and docile expectation because God's grace often manifests itself in surprising ways that do not match our expectations. Together, let us think about Mother Teresa of Calcutta, for example. A tiny sister — no one took her very seriously — who went around the streets to gather up the dying so that they could have a dignified death. With prayer and her work, this tiny sister performed wonders! A small woman revolutionized charity work in the Church. She sets an example for our times. God does not conform to human prejudices. We must make an effort to open our heart and mind to welcome the divine reality which comes to encounter us. It is a case of having faith: lack of faith is an obstacle to God's grace. Many people who have been baptized live as though Christ did not exist. They repeat the gestures and the signs of faith but these do not correspond to a true bond with Jesus' person and his Gospel. Each Christian — all of us, each of us — is called to deepen this fundamental belonging, and try to bear witness to it with a consistent conduct in life, always motivated by charity.

Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, let us ask the Lord to melt the hardness of hearts and the narrowness of minds so that we can be open to his grace, to his truth and to his mission of goodness and mercy which is addressed to all, with no exception.

After the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, yesterday in Bari, with the Patriarchs of the Churches of the Middle East and their Representatives, we experienced a special day of prayer and reflection for peace in that region. I give thanks to God for this meeting which was an eloquent sign of Christian unity and in which the People of God participated with enthusiasm. I thank my Brother Church Leaders and those who represented them: I was truly edified by their attitude and by their testimony. I thank the Archbishop of Bari, humble brother and servant, the assistants and all the faithful who accompanied us and supported us with prayer and their joyful presence.

Today is "Sea Sunday" which is dedicated to seafarers and fishermen. I pray for them and their families, as well as for the chaplains and the volunteers of the Apostleship of the Sea. I offer a special thought to those who experience humiliating working conditions at sea and to those who work to free the seas from pollution.

I cordially greet you all, people of Rome and pilgrims! I greet the faithful from Poland with a special

thought for those taking part in Radio Maria's great annual family pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Częstochowa. I greet the altar servers from the Philippines and their families; the young people from Padua, the group of students and teachers from Brescia and the scouts from Pont-Saint-Martin, Val d'Aosta. And I see Brazilian flags.... I greet the Brazilians and take courage! There will be another time! I wish you all a Happy Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch and *Arrivederci*.