

July is the Month of the Precious Blood

The Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflections from Scott Hahn & John Bergsma . . .

This Sunday's readings draw a comparison between three groups: stiff-necked Israelites in the time of the prophets, the townsfolk of Nazareth in the days of Jesus, and you and I sitting in the pew. The message to us is to repent and believe the Good News.

As we've walked with the Apostles in the Gospels in recent weeks, we've witnessed Jesus command the wind and sea, and order a little girl to arise from the dead. But He seems to meet His match in His hometown of Nazareth. Today's Gospel is blunt: "He was not able to perform any mighty deed there."

The townspeople of Nazareth are hard hearted and unbelieving, like the Judean's of Ezekiel's day. At stake is pride—they don't want to admit that a humble, hometown boy has anything to teach them. Their lack of faith impedes Christ's work. Does this mean that God is not all powerful? No! God has chosen to make his healing power dependent on our faith. God may give, but we have to accept. The people of Nazareth would not accept the gift of God among them. All they could see was how much "this man" was like them—a carpenter, the son of their neighbour.

Mary was ever-virgin and had no other children. The Gospel refers to Jesus' "brothers" just as Paul refers to all Israelites as "his brothers," the children of Abraham.

Like the prophet Ezekiel in today's First Reading, Jesus was sent by God to the rebellious house of Israel, where He found His own brothers and sisters obstinate of heart and in revolt against God. As His disciples, we too face the mockery and contempt we hear of in today's Psalm. And isn't it often hardest to live our faith among those in our own families, those who think they really know us? The same can also be true of us: overfamiliarity with Jesus, with the teaching of Scripture, with the Eucharist and the sacraments, can lead to a ho-hum attitude in which we no longer expect God's power to "show up" in our lives.

As Paul confides in today's Epistle, insults and hardships are God's way of teaching us to rely solely on His grace. Jesus will work no mighty deeds in our lives unless we abandon ourselves to Him in faith. If we are experiencing "weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints" right now, let's give thanks to God for them, because it is through these things that God often wakes us up out of the stupor we've fallen into. Remember last weeks quote from the Gospel, "Do not be afraid; only have faith." A life of radical holiness is possible for us, today, now, starting with this very Mass when these Scriptures are read. What's holding us back is that we don't believe Jesus can do it for us; but that can change!



Plenary Council:

As the first session of the Plenary Councils draws closer please continue to pray for all involved and that the Holy Spirit, who is the guide of the Church, will be listened to and followed. This weeks reflection, is from the Gospel of St Mark: 'What is this wisdom that has been granted him, and these miracles that are worked through him?' What can we do to express respectful and cooperative attitudes with others in Australian society, focusing on opportunities to witness to God's grace at work in the world?

What have you done for your Faith today?