

FOURTEEN Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel Reading

8th July 2018

Mark 6:1-6

Jesus is rejected in his hometown.

Background on the Gospel Reading

, This Gospel immediately follows upon last week's stories of the raising of Jairus's daughter and the healing of the woman with a hemorrhage. It sets the context of our Gospel readings for the next two weeks in which Jesus will extend the work of his ministry to his disciples.

Today's Gospel describes what many believe to have been the typical pattern of Jesus' ministry: teaching in the synagogue followed by acts of healing. In his hometown of Nazareth, the people are amazed by what they hear, but they also cannot comprehend how someone they know so well might move them so powerfully.

In this Gospel, we learn some interesting details about Jesus and his early life. Jesus' kinfolk know him to be a carpenter, an artisan who works in wood, stone, and metal. He probably learned this trade from his father. Family members of Jesus are also named. Mark describes Jesus as the son of Mary, which is an unusual designation. Adult males were more typically identified with the name of their fathers. It is unclear why Mark deviates from this custom.

Brothers and sisters of Jesus are also named. Scholars are divided on how to interpret this. As Catholics, we believe that Mary was and remained always a virgin, thus we do not believe that this Gospel refers to other children of Mary.

Some have suggested that these family members might be Joseph's children from a previous marriage, but there is little evidence to support this. Others explain this reference by noting that the words *brother* and *sister* were often used to refer to other types of relatives, including cousins, nieces, and nephews.

This Gospel tells us that Jesus is hampered from performing miracles in Nazareth because of the people's lack of faith. Jesus is said to be surprised by this. He did not predict or foresee this rejection.

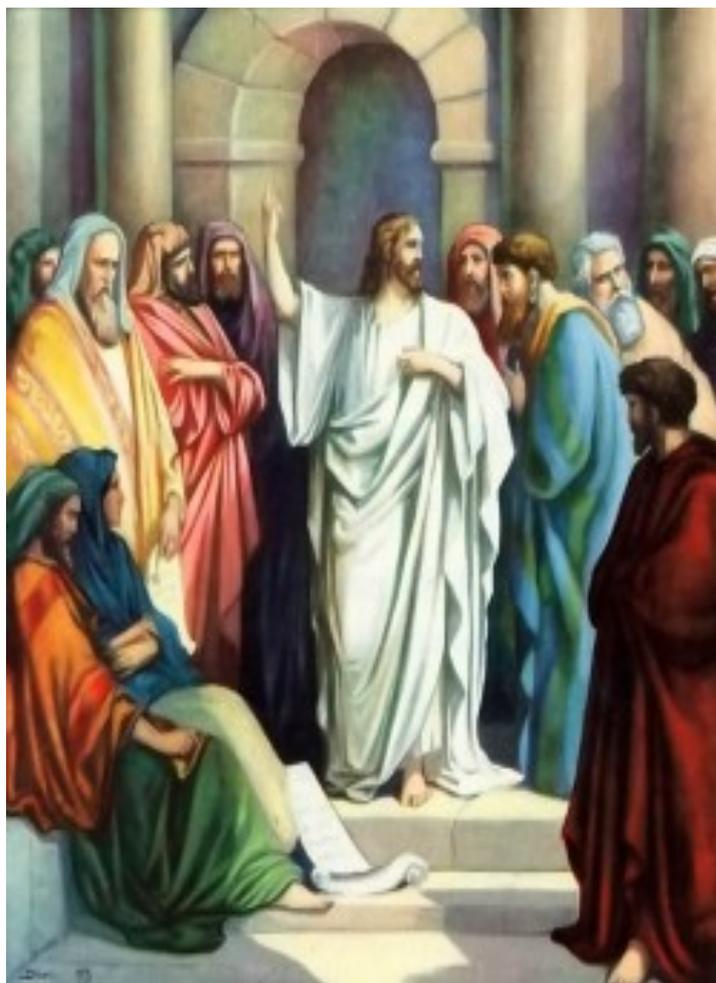
In this detail we find a description of the very human

side of Jesus.

This passage unfolds a continuing theme of Mark's Gospel: Who is Jesus? His kinfolk in Nazareth might know the carpenter, the son of Mary, but they do not know Jesus, the Son of God. Mark is foreshadowing Jesus' rejection by his own people, the people of Israel. He is also reflecting on and trying to explain the situation of the community for which he wrote.

While many of the first Christians were Jewish, Christianity took hold and flourished in the Gentile community. Mark's community was mostly a Gentile community, who may have been experiencing persecution. By showing that Jesus himself was rejected, Mark consoles and reassures his first readers. He also prepares us to accept this possible consequence of Christian discipleship.

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