

# ***DISABLING JESUS***

**14<sup>TH</sup> Sunday OT**

**Year B**

**Ez 2:2-5; Ps 123:1-4; 2Cor 12:7-10; Mk 6:1-6**

**Dcn. Tom McConnell**

**An old man is wondering if his wife has a hearing problem. So, one night while his wife is sitting in her lounge chair, he goes behind her and says softly to her, “*Honey, can you hear me?*” He gets no response. He moves a little closer and says again, “*Honey, can you hear me?*” Still, he gets no response. Finally, he moves right next her and says, “*Honey, can you hear me?*” This time she looks up with surprise in her eyes and replies, “*For the third time, Henry! Yes, I can hear you!*” Who has the hearing problem now, the man or his wife? We are all too ready to blame the other person for a breakdown in communication, when all the time we, ourselves, might be principally responsible for that breakdown.**

**In today’s Gospel, St. Mark records a serious breakdown in communication between Jesus and his townspeople. It was so serious that Jesus was literally unable to perform great miracles there: “*So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying His hands on them.*” (Mark 6:5).**

**This is one of the most shocking statements in all the Gospels – that Jesus could not perform some miracles. Not that he would not,**

**but that he simply could not. Is anything impossible with Jesus? Today's Gospel says yes. It is impossible for Jesus to perform great miracles in a situation where there is no faith. Jesus could do all things and wants to do all things for his people, but he needs our faith to release his power. Last week's Gospel from the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday of OT, told of the woman with the issue of blood. Many people were touching and pushing against Jesus. Nothing happened because they did not touch Him with faith. But as soon as the woman of faith touches him, healing power comes out of Jesus. As all-powerful as Jesus is, we have the capacity to disable him by our lack of faith. Faith is like a switch that turns God on...lack of faith turns God off.**

**The people of Nazareth took offense at Jesus for his inability to perform miracles among them. Do you sometimes wonder at God's silence and apparent inactivity in a world of corruption and injustice? But the really amazing thing, as far as Jesus is concerned, is the lack of faith among his people. "*He was amazed at their unbelief*" (Mark 6:6). When we blame God for doing nothing while we**

**suffer all things here below, does God perhaps hold us responsible for our unbelief that has made it impossible for Him to act?**

**So, why did His people of Nazareth not believe in Him? Jesus says it's because "*Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house*" (Mark 6:4). An equivalent modern saying would be, "*Familiarity breeds contempt.*" The people of Nazareth thought they knew everything there was to know about Jesus. They knew his family and educational background, and they were not impressed.**

**People who are late converts to Catholicism often do better than old timers in the faith because there's a tendency among old timers to think that they know everything there is to know about the Catholic faith. This becomes an obstacle hindering us from experiencing the mercy and power of God, which is offered anew each day, through the same old pastor, the same old preaching, the same old sacraments. Familiarity does indeed breed contempt. But today's Gospel challenges us to strive every day to discover the new**

**something that God is offering us through the same old and familiar channels.**

**Finally, I just have to say a word about the so-called “brothers” of Jesus who are here mentioned by name. For Catholics and other Christians who believe in the perpetual virginity of Mary before and after the birth of Jesus, this may raise a problem. Briefly we can say that: (1) In Aramaic, as in most African languages, the word “brother” has a much wider usage than in the English language, designating not only siblings but also half-brothers, cousins and other close blood relationships. (2) Scripture in no place refers to these “brothers of Jesus” as sons of Mary. If Mary had other children, why would the dying Jesus bequeath her to his disciple John (John 19:26-27)? (3) Some of the people mentioned here as “brothers” of Jesus – James and Joses – are elsewhere mentioned as sons of another woman, also called Mary, who provided for Jesus (Mark 15:40). Remember that Mark is trying to show us how mistaken the people of Nazareth were in thinking they**

**knew everything about Jesus, when in fact they did not really know him. We should know better.**

**Today's Gospel is a sad story of people who met Jesus and left without a blessing. As we meet Jesus today in his Word and in the Eucharist, let us resolve not to leave without a blessing. Let us renew our faith in Him.**

**...May God Bless You All!**