

Friday of the Seventeenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 13,54-58): Jesus went to his hometown and taught the people in their synagogue. They were amazed and said, «Where did He get this wisdom and these special powers? Isn't He the carpenter's son? Isn't Mary his mother and aren't James, Joseph, Simon and Judas his brothers? Aren't all his sisters living here? How did he get all this?». And so they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, «The only place where prophets are not welcome is their hometown and in their own family». And He did not perform many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

«The only place where prophets are not welcome is their hometown and in their own family»

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Today, as in yesteryears, to speak about God to those we know is a difficult thing to do. In a commentary about Jesus, St. John Chrysostom says: «The villagers of Nazareth do admire him, but their admiration does not go to the point of believing in him but, rather, of feeling envious, as if meaning: ‘Why him and not I’». Jesus knew quite well those who, instead of listening to him, took offense at him. They were his relatives, friends, neighbors He appreciated, but precisely to whom He will not be able to let them have his message of salvation.

We —that cannot work out miracles or have Christ's saintliness— will not incite envies (though, at times, if we are really trying to live as true Christians, we may actually do). However, come what may, we shall often find that those we love the most are those who could not care less about listening to us. To this effect, we must also bear in mind that shortcomings are easier to spot than virtues and, accordingly, those closer to us may wonder: —What are you trying to teach me, who used to do (or still does) this or that?

To preach or speak about God with our own people or family may be difficult but

necessary. It must be said that when He was going back home, Jesus was preceded by his miracles and his word. Maybe, in our case, we may need a certain reputation for saintliness, whether at home or away, before “preaching” to those at home.

In his previous comment St. John Chrysostom adds: «Please look at the Master's kindness: He does not punish them for not listening to him but He tells them sweetly: ‘The only place where prophets are not welcome is their hometown and in their own family’» (Mt 13:57)». It is evident Jesus would leave somewhat sadly but nonetheless He would proceed with his preaching until his word of salvation would be welcome by his own people. Likewise, we (that have nothing to forgive or oversee) will have to preach so that Jesus' word reaches those that we love but do not want to listen to us.