

31. January 2024

## The rejection of Jesus in Nazareth

Mk 6:1-6

*Jesus went away from there and came to his own country; and his disciples followed him. And on the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching.*

What could be the reason why those who knew Jesus from His days in Nazareth did not accept Him as a prophet and were even scandalised by Him? It is in this context that Jesus uttered the significant phrase: "*A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house*".

This scene recalls the words spoken by the Lord through the mouth of the prophet Hosea: "*The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Ba'als, and burning incense to idols*" (Hos 11:2).

Perhaps the natural familiarity with a certain person, whom we know or think we know well, makes it difficult to believe that he or she is chosen by God. It is paradoxical, in fact, because it should be considered a great honour and a grace that one of our relatives should receive a special call from God to enter His service. In this case, we have the honour of living close to that person and sharing in the grace that God gives him or her. In this way, our own lives also receive a new light.

But perhaps envy is aroused in some... However, the most common reason for rejection may be that it is difficult to understand God's direct call to a person. On the one hand, his or her life takes on a different character than usual, often breaking with our own patterns. On the other hand, the vocation does not always manifest itself in a totally

extraordinary and special way. That is why it can be difficult for some people to understand.

The people of Nazareth knew the Lord, the carpenter's son; they knew His mother and His relatives. They had heard of His works, and now they wondered where His wisdom and His miracles came from. But they could not conclude that the presence of God was uniquely manifested in Jesus. So they were scandalised by Him and rejected Him. In Luke's Gospel it is even said that after He had preached in the synagogue in Nazareth, they wanted to throw Him off a hill (Lk 4:29).

Indeed, there is a danger that when one closes oneself to a grace of God (such as the coming of Jesus into the world), one's heart hardens and one becomes increasingly incapable of recognising what the Lord is doing. Even visible signs that clearly testify to God's presence can be misinterpreted and used against the person who performs them. Something similar can happen with the Word of God, which is meant to instruct and enlighten people, but they can close their ears and refuse to listen.

Yesterday we saw in the story of Saint Martina how the pagan emperor closed his eyes to the undeniable miracles that were taking place before his eyes, considering them to be sorcery, and even increased the tortures to force the saint into idolatry.

We can only fully understand this degree of closed-mindedness if we take into account the influence of demons. Indeed, if we close ourselves to the truth, we can become increasingly blind. Everything that should help us to see the truth can then be misinterpreted and even become scandalous. At this point it is very easy for the demons to exert their influence if it was not they who caused the blindness in the first place.

Under this influence, rejection becomes hostility and the opposite of what God intended happens. In the book of Hosea it is said that the children of Israel, instead of heeding God's call, turned even more to idols.

In the case of Jesus, the rejection of Him in His home village increased to the point that they even wanted to kill Him.

A lesson for us from this Gospel passage is to always hold fast to the truth handed down to us by Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church, and never to deviate from it.