

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)

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Today, once again, the Word of God enlightens us to live the present time as Christians. The readings we have just heard tell us about three great prophets: Ezekiel, Paul, and Jesus: Ezekiel prophesized during the time of Israel's exile in Babylon (6th century B.C.); Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles; and Jesus astonished the people of Nazareth with his words. We will first make a brief reference to Ezekiel that will help us to better understand today's Gospel, as well as the second reading from Paul's Letter to the Corinthians. May our meditation on the Word of God this Sunday strengthen our life of faith, both personally and as a community.

**"I am sending you to ... a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me"
(Ezekiel 2:2-5)**

Ezekiel was chosen to be God's prophet to the Israelites who had been taken to Babylon. It was not an easy task because he had been born and raised in the land of Judah and was preparing to become a priest in God's temple when the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem in 597 BC and took him and 10,000 other prisoners (2 Kings 24:10-14). Five years later, living as a captive in Babylon, Ezekiel saw one of the most glorious and awesome revelations of God's presence and power (Ezekiel 1:4). Through this vision, God called Ezekiel to be His prophet. Although Ezekiel knew that he would face a rebellious people and that he was sure he would suffer hardship because of his message, he faithfully chose to answer God's call and preached to the rebellious people for 22 years. The response of the people would be full of hatred against the prophet and Ezekiel's faithfulness to the mission entrusted by God would be strongly tested.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (2

Corinthians 12:7b-10)

Paul speaks of “a thorn” given to him. We do not know exactly what it is, but it is something that causes him much suffering and pain in his whole being. Paul asked the Lord to remove it, but His answer was: “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” This answer convinced Paul that no matter how hard things were, it was in those times that the Lord would be with him. One of his deepest concerns was his strong awareness that he could not carry out the mission the Lord had given him, that is, to continue working as an apostle to the Gentiles, on his own, partly because a group of Christians spread a rumor that Paul was a false apostle and more people started doubting his teachings. Just as in the parable from the Gospel, Paul’s enemies sowed weed on the field where he had sowed wheat by discrediting him, but he did not give up. Supported by those words of the Lord, Paul continued to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

Jesus is rejected as a prophet in his hometown of Nazareth (Mark 6:1-6)

After meditating on the prophetic vocation of Ezekiel and Paul, we can better understand what happened to Jesus in his hometown when he began his preaching of the kingdom of God. While peasants and simple people of Galilee saw Jesus healing through his words and deeds and found in him a prophet moved by the Spirit of God, many people didn’t. We can think that the rejection of Jesus in his hometown of Nazareth was much commented among the first Christians because the three evangelists report the episode in detail.

Today, the evangelist Mark describes the event as follows: When the Sabbath arrived, Jesus entered a small synagogue of Nazareth, the place where the Jews gathered to pray and listen to the Word of God and its commentary by someone from the assembly. Jesus begins to teach the people including his neighbors and relatives who have known him since he was a child. To them Jesus is just another neighbor. No wonder they ask: Where did he learn this amazing message about the kingdom of God? From whom did he get this power to heal? Unable to accept the unexpected behavior of the Jesus they had known since childhood, the people of Nazareth refused to see in him the

God of salvation and healing.

We are no exception: It is not uncommon for us to be so tainted by stereotypes that we are unable to get God's messages straight. Let us ask for the grace to always accept the Word of God in an unclouded heart and live a life of following the Lord Jesus.

Note: All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New American Bible, Revised Edition (NABRE).