



## CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

*Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation*

July 5, 2015

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### **Gospel reading Mark 6:1-6 7** *[To be read aloud]*

Jesus departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house." So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

### **Brief commentary:**

It has often been said of the prophets that "they comforted the afflicted and afflicted the comfortable." Prophets like Ezekiel in today's readings felt compelled to expose and *denounce* what was contrary to God's will and *announce* what God wants. Because they often spoke 'truth to power', and called the people to reform, they understandably experienced opposition from those who felt their interests threatened by their revealing message. Prophets often question what typically goes unquestioned; they 'make waves' and 'rock the boat'. They call us to question the assumptions by which the world runs and by which we often live. They call us to take a second look at our world and at our lives. Like a light shining in our faces when we've become accustomed to the darkness, the prophets shine the compelling light of truth before the darkness of ignorance, complacency, apathy and indifference toward God and toward justice and compassion. The prophets want us to feel what God feels and to empathize with those who suffer. Yet, even more, the prophets call for transformation and action. They call us to reform our lives, change our ways of thinking, valuing, and living. They shake us from our comfort and call us to do God's will. Not always easy. But the prophets are far more than social critics and social reformers, they are spokespersons of God; and it has often been said of the biblical prophets that they were "the conscience of Israel." The fiery passion of the prophets is due to their acute sensitivity toward good and evil, their intuitive ability to see beyond smokescreens and delusions to discern between what is right and wrong. Their impassioned message is the result of a sharing in 'the Passion' – the suffering, the grieving, the outrage – of God for the evil in the world that destroys humanity and the evil cares little about humanity. And if a prophet comes from among us, from the familiar, it is even more unexpected and shocking. Instead of receiving their message as an opportunity to turn our lives around, we resist, and consider them to be bad 'team players'. But the prophets are evidence that God believes in us, in our ability to change, to accept truth as liberating, and to seek justice and mercy. In today's readings we find how Ezekiel, Jesus and Paul faced opposition and rejection, but still continued their mission undeterred. The prophetic conscience confronts us today: How many of us are indifferent to injustice, oppression, poverty, prejudice, and corruptions of all forms (political, economic, moral, social)! How unconcerned we often are about our suffering sisters and brothers in Iraq, Syria and Africa! How little urgency we feel for so many who are being persecuted, while we wine and dine without a care! But the prophets don't allow us to take it easy and so we silence them, we stone and crucify them. The prophets are so invested in the cause of the kingdom of God that they have put aside their concerns for self-preservation – the diametrically different attitude of the complacent. Prophets are daring, they take risks, they are innovative, they truly care. Jesus, more than a prophet – the Word of God made flesh – compels and confronts us, pulls the rug from below our feet, yet empowers us to embrace the 'truth that makes us free' and 'seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness'. Why would the Romans find in Jesus such a threat that they had to crucify him, or why would anyone bother to follow Jesus, if it wasn't that he was truly prophetic? And his disciples must follow him and likewise be the same!

### **Today's reading offers significant messages:**

- Jesus, like the prophets, *denounced* what was wrong and *announced* the will of God. As a result he was rejected by some, while others were inspired to follow him.
- When we become accustomed to the darkness in our lives and in our world, and become complacent, the message of the prophets and especially of Jesus' can awaken us, confront us, and empower us to change ourselves and our world.
- Christians must be prophetic. Like Jesus we too must speak and act on behalf of those oppressed, comfort the afflicted; and we too must 'afflict the comfortable', 'speak truth to power', insist on urgent active concern toward those being ignored or destroyed.

### **For our shared or personal reflection:**

*After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.*

- How does the Jesus of the gospels and his message disturb me from my comfort?
- What are those things that Christians ought to denounce, and what should we announce?
- How am I being prophetic in my parish, diocese, society, world?

*Suggested readings:* Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 64, 783-86