

Fr. Rudy's Reflections  
The Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
July 7, 2024

### **Familiarity and Faith: Reflections from Nazareth**

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

In our what-about-me world, we can certainly see examples of the adage “familiarity breeds contempt.” For instance, consider a local schoolteacher who, after years of dedicated service, earns a prestigious award for innovative teaching methods. Suddenly, instead of celebrating that person’s success, some community members whisper, “Who does she think she is?” They can’t reconcile the person they knew with the accolades she now receives. *You might leave admiration and respect at the door when you know another person’s perceived flaws or origins, but this says more about you than it does about her/him.*

This mirrors the reaction Jesus faced in his hometown, as recounted in Mark 6:1-6, on this Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time. When Jesus returned to Nazareth, his countrymen were initially astonished by his teaching in the synagogue. They marveled at the wisdom and miracles attributed to him, yet this admiration quickly turned to skepticism and resentment. They questioned, “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?” To them, Jesus was just a local boy, a tradesman. His humble origins and previous status as a carpenter fixed him forever in their eyes. They struggled to see beyond the familiar, asking themselves, “Who does he think he is?” This reflects our human tendency to confine people to the roles and statuses we have always known them by, often underestimating their potential.

Jesus, in turn, was astonished by their lack of faith. He exclaimed, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.” This profound statement highlights a universal truth: those closest to us often struggle the most to recognize our growth and capabilities. Jesus, being fully human, likely felt the sting of their rejection. Despite the miracles and teachings that he shared, their disbelief was real. His reaction underscores the pain of being misunderstood by those who know us best.

Just prior to this visit, Jesus had performed numerous miracles elsewhere, showcasing his divine authority. Yet, in his own hometown, the prevailing skepticism and hardened hearts prevented many of his powerful works. This contrast is stark. It was not that Jesus lost his power; rather, the people’s lack of faith created an environment where miracles could not flourish. Nazareth’s rejection becomes a poignant testament to the power of faith—or the consequences of its absence.

Jesus’s experience in Nazareth teaches us a crucial lesson: he does not force belief upon anyone. Despite his divine nature and the evidence of his works, some people remain steadfast in their unbelief. We are called to follow his example, recognizing that faith cannot be compelled. Instead, we are to live out our beliefs authentically, letting our actions and the way we live our lives serve as a testament to our faith. By embodying Christ’s teachings through love, compassion, and integrity, we may inspire others to believe. It is through our consistent example, rather than forceful persuasion, that we can most effectively share the message of the Gospel.

Yours in Christ,  
Fr. Rudy