

Gospel Reflections on Mark 6:1-6
14th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B
5th July 2015

In last week's Gospel we saw two powerful expressions of *faith* from Jairus the synagogue official and the woman with the twelve year haemorrhage. In this week's Gospel Jesus is confronted by those in his home town and he is *amazed at their lack of faith*. They do not deny that Jesus has been granted *wisdom* or that he has *worked miracles*. But what they do deny is that such things could come from one of their own, one so close to them, and one that had lived in their own community for years – that something so profound could come from the *ordinary* and the *known*. They would not receive Jesus and the truth he was speaking.

This too is a problem for us today in several ways. Where are the prophetic voices amongst us? Or more importantly where are they being listened to? It seems that we are very resistant to listen to anything that asks us to let go of something, be it an attitude, a belief, a pre conceived idea about something or someone, or to open into a change of heart or mind about anything. We can be very fixed in our own idea of things or what the surrounding community or culture dictate to us. Ultimately we can fear change and what it may ask of us.

I am half way through reading Pope Francis' recent encyclical *Laudate Si* and so far it reads to me like a profound Love letter pleading for us to wake up to what we are doing to our Earth and to each other. It is very challenging in that it asks us to really reflect upon and change the way we live our lives and the way we Love (and do not Love) our neighbour and the Earth. Do we *listen* to this prophetic voice in our midst? When we are caught in our own comforts and resistant to let some of them go or when we are caught in an economic mentality of growth, growth, growth or more, more, more as the ultimate priority regardless of the effect on our planet, the poor or each other then Jesus too is *amazed at our lack of faith*.

For how many years have we seen young people (and not so young people) protest passionately against the atrocities we are doing to our planet and to each other only to brand them as hippies, trouble makers, do gooders or radical idiots etc? Our judgements of them then seem to justify our refusal to listen to them just as happened in our Gospel today with Jesus. How often do we *not accept* these prophetic voices in our midst because we don't want to be awakened from our sleep? Are we prepared to be disturbed by such prophets?

In Albert Nolan's book *Jesus Today* he says: *prophets are people who have learned to read the signs of their times. It is by focusing their attention on, and becoming fully aware of, the political, social, economic, military, and religious tendencies of their time that prophets are able to see where it is all heading. Reading the signs of his time would have been an integral part of Jesus' spirituality. Page 64*. This is why prophets in our midst can make us feel so very uncomfortable and why we persecute and even kill them. Nolan also says that *Any attempt to practice the same spirituality as Jesus would entail learning to speak out boldly as he did – and facing the consequences*. Just how prepared or open are we to adopt this prophetic spirituality of Jesus?

The prophetic voices of many women (and men) have cried out over recent decades for women to be recognized as equals to men in our unfolding human story. So many women today are persecuted and oppressed and even killed simply because they are women. Any deliberate exclusion or oppression of women in any area of life, be it cultural or church related, is surely an affront to the awakened heart – an affront to Love. Domination in any form runs counter to the natural order and is ultimately destructive to itself and everything around it. Domination is never acceptable and the prophetic heart cannot remain silent in its midst.

Jesus believed and lived the Oneness he experienced with everything. He knew the interconnectedness of everything. Science today highlights this in a way we haven't known before. The mystics and the prophets have always declared what science now

confirms – everything is One. To go against this Oneness throws everything out of balance and that is what we are seeing and experiencing in our world today. The prophetic voices in our midst will relentlessly call us back into this balance – to this Oneness. Real faith is prophetic.

In Ilia Delio's book *Christ in Evolution* she says: *The meaning of Christ must move from the altar of the church to the altar of the world.....belief in Christ empowers a new vision for the world which can unfold only in and through us.* Page 176 Further on Delio says: *We humans have the potential to make Christ alive; it is what we are created for. To live the mystery of Christ is not to speak about Christ but to live in the surrender of love, the poverty of being, and the cave of the heart. If we can allow the Spirit to really take hold of us and liberate us from our fears, anxieties, demands, and desire for power and control, then we can truly seek the living among the dead; we can live in the risen Christ who empowers us to build this new creation.* To open into such a life is to be a prophetic voice for our world regardless of any religious or non-religious affiliation.

Will we listen to the *astonishment* we experience in our own hearts or will we judge with a divided heart and resist the disturbance we feel in the presence of the prophetic voices around us and then persecute the messenger? As Jesus looks into each of our hearts today what will be seen there? Will this Spirit of Love be *amazed by our faith* or *amazed by our lack of faith*? © Annemarie Reiner