

XIV ORDINARY TIME- 8th July 2018

A PROPHET IS NOT WITHOUT HONOUR, EXCEPT IN HIS HOMETOWN

Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

Mark 6,1-6

He went away from there and came to his hometown, 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 these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done 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 honour, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief.

And he went about among the villages teaching.

The most difficult environments for Jesus are undoubtedly religious places. In Mark's gospel Jesus enters the synagogues three times, three meaning totality and each time there is a situation of conflict. In the first Jesus is interrupted in his teaching; in the second the Pharisees actually want to kill him and the third time, that which we will examine now, the people don't consider him at all. Let's read Mark chapter 6. 1-6.

"*He went away from there and came to his hometown, ...*" the evangelist omits the name Nazareth because he wants to indicate that what is happening here is not limited to his country alone, but to the whole nation. "*..and his disciples followed him. And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue..*" the evangelist underlines that Jesus went to the synagogue to teach and his teaching is exactly the opposite of that imposed by the scribes. "*.. and many who heard him were astonished,*" they are shocked, here is something new, "*.. saying,*" their action is negative, "*Where did this man get these things?*" What is the meaning of where? It means that it did not come from God. And the crowd, the people, the participants of the synagogue are victims of the scribes that have already declared that Jesus' teachings are the work of Beelzebub, the prince of demons and therefore they suspect his teaching. And they say "*What is the wisdom given to him?*" Since Jesus teaches the exact opposite of what the scribes teach, his wisdom cannot come from God.

And then "*How are such mighty works done by his hands?*" it isn't Jesus that performs the works, but his hands, as if Jesus was a wizard. So it is the crowd, those that participate at the assembly of prayer in the synagogue that believe in ancient ways that the scribes have taught them. And here words full of contempt "*Is not this the carpenter,...*" They do not turn to Jesus, yet he was their fellow citizen, with a courtesy word, they do not address him with kindness, but with disrespect, "*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary..*" This is a grave error because a person was always referred to with the father's name, son of the father. Why do they say he is son of Mary? There can be two hypotheses: that this son is unworthy to have the father's name because he does not

behaviour like his father or even worse that he is without a father and therefore a great insult. And here the list of brothers.

And the conclusion *“And they took offense at him.”* The evangelist warns that uncritical submission to religious teaching not only does not allow us to accept the word of the Lord and the richness of life that it entails, but makes it refractory and hostile. And Jesus in fact comments *“Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honour, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household.”* Hometown, relatives and home are three, meaning the totality.

Why is the prophet despised? Because the prophet in tune with the God who makes all things new always finds resistance from religious circles. In the name of the God of the past we do not recognize the God who manifests himself in the present and therefore in traditional environments, in conservative circles where the imperative is in force "it has always been so" therefore God's work is worthless.

In fact the evangelist writes a comment *“And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.”* The Evangelist again warns: attention that adherence to uncritical religious teaching renders refractory to divine action.

And the reading ends *“And he marvelled because of their unbelief.”* Jesus himself marvels at the unbelief and the evangelist refers here to the seed fallen on the ground, but immediately the birds came, the image of Satan and power and eliminate it. So Jesus was a total failure in his homeland because of the traditional religious teaching.