

## 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B – 7 July 2024

Every time I go home to the Philippines, though I am a priest, I am still the fifth child in the family. So, it means I have to wash the dishes. No perks and privileges being a priest at home. My chores remain as it was before I left home.

Jesus also went home to Nazareth. And one sabbath, he began to teach in the synagogue. Many who were listening asked themselves: "Where did he get all this wisdom? Isn't he the son of the carpenter and Mary, that is, of our neighbours that we know so well?"

Let us reflect on the attitude of Jesus' townspeople. We could say they knew Jesus, but they did not recognise him. We can know various things about a person, form an idea, rely on what others say about that person; we might perhaps meet that person every now and then in the neighbourhood. This is a knowledge that is, I would say, ordinary and superficial. We all run this risk: we think we know so much about a person; still worse, we use labels, put the person in the box, and close the person within our own prejudices. Jesus' townspeople knew him for thirty years in the same way and they thought they know everything about him. They said, "But isn't this the boy we saw growing up, the son of the carpenter and Mary? Where do these things come from?". There is the tone of distrust. Yes, they know Jesus, but in reality, they never realised who Jesus truly was. They remained at the exterior level and refused what was being revealed by Jesus.

And here, we enter into the heart of the matter. When we allow prejudice to have the upper hand, it is difficult to open ourselves to what is new and being revealed, and allow ourselves to be amazed. It often happens in life that we seek from our experiences and even from people only those things that conforms to our own ideas and ways of thinking.

And this can even happen to us in our relationship with God. We think we know Jesus, that we already know so much about him and that it is enough to repeat the same things as always. However, we cannot know everything about God. We need to be open to what is new, what is being revealed, and, above all to be open to God's surprises. Without amazement, faith becomes a tiring litany that slowly dies out and becomes a social habit. Amazement is what we feel when we have that authentic encounter with the Lord. We read in the Gospel: many times, the people who encountered Jesus and recognised him felt amazed.

In the end, why didn't Jesus' fellow villagers recognise and believe in him? Why? What is the reason? As Pope Francis said, "they did not accept the scandal of the Incarnation. They did not know this mystery of the

Incarnation, they did not accept the mystery; they did not know it. They did not know the reason and they thought it was scandalous that the immensity of God should be revealed in the smallness of our flesh, that the Son of God should be the son of a carpenter, that the divine should be hidden in the human, that God should inhabit a face, the words, the gestures of a simple man. This is the scandal: the incarnation of God, his concreteness, his daily life. And God became concrete in a man, Jesus of Nazareth, he became a companion on the way, he made himself one of us.”

Indeed, Jesus is the Emmanuel, the Word made Flesh. To say "You are one of us" is a beautiful prayer. It is because one of us understands us, accompanies us, forgives us, loves us so much. He draws near to us, living the normality of our daily life.

The same thing could happen to us like Jesus' townspeople. In our life's pursuit, we run the risk that when he passes by, we will not recognise him. Saint Augustine said in his prayer: "I am afraid of God, of the Lord, when he passes by. I am afraid of not recognising him when the Lord passes by." We could not recognize him, we sometimes are scandalised by His presence in the ordinariness or even in the difficulty of the circumstance. We are reminded that in every moment, God continues to reveal his presence despite the ordinariness, despite the challenges we are facing.

Let us ask the Lord for eyes and hearts free of prejudices and to have eyes open to be amazed. Let us pray, "Lord that we might meet you!" that we might recognize the giftedness of every moment with your presence. And when we encounter you, fill our hearts with amazement. An amazed heart leads to humility and recognition that indeed, you are an awesome God.