

Dear Friends,

For my letter this week I would like to share a reflection on the gospel reading from Mass this past Wednesday.

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark 6:1-6

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 Joseph 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.

The people who heard Jesus knew him his entire life. They were his kin, his neighbors and friends but they couldn't understand how he had become such a great preacher. This boy from the backwoods of Galilee had now become this great and wonderful rabbi and they didn't appreciate what Jesus had to say. They must have felt talked down to. They were offended by what Jesus had to say.

Prophets are not appreciated because they speak the truth of God's Word to the world and that truth is often difficult to hear. The truth disciplines us. When we know we have been living a lie the truth gives us the proper direction. When we become aware of the fact that our prayer lacks intimacy the truth of God's love encourages us to try harder, to be more disciplined in how we pray.

However, the greatest challenge we face today is to listen to the truth of God's Word in our lives. It can be so easy for us to dismiss the challenges of learning, listening, and of working on our relationship with God.

I know from personal experience that discipline is a three-syllable dirty word. Prayer takes effort. Listening to God's Word is hard work. When I pray, when I work to study and understand God's Word my life goes in unplanned directions and yet, I know exactly where I am and what is happening in my life. And when I choose to ignore prayer, when I choose to be deaf to God's Word, when I choose my own course I get lost, confused, frustrated.

Discipline is not easy, but it opens our hearts to hear the truth of God's love in our lives. When our hearts are open to that light we are filled with peace, we become holy people, we know better this mysterious love relationship with God that so deeply enriches our lives.

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel