

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year B

Ezekiel 2:2-5
2 Corinthians 12:7-10
Mark 6:1-6

(An unlit candle, a bible open to this week's gospel and a cross rest on a table covered with green cloth.)

OPENING PRAYER

(The leader lights the candle and calls the community to rest in quiet awareness of God with them. After some minutes of silence, the community prays as follows.)

All: Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.

Leader: To you I lift up my eyes
who are enthroned in heaven—
as the eyes of servants
are on the hands of their masters.

All: Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.

Leader: As the eyes of a maid
are on the hands of her mistress,
so are our eyes on the LORD, our God,
till he have pity on us.

All: Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.

Leader: Have pity on us, O LORD, have pity on us,
for we are more than sated with contempt;

our souls are more than sated
with the mockery of the arrogant,
with the contempt of the proud.

All: Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his
mercy

Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

(A selection of instrumental music is played.)

COMMENTARY

The Jewish people knew that a messiah would be given to them. Their Hebrew scriptures are filled with references to this messiah. Most envisioned that the messiah would be a powerful leader who would free them from the harsh reign of the Roman Empire. It did not occur to them that the messiah would come as a humble carpenter's son. The town's people of Jesus' birth only knew Jesus as Joseph's son, a carpenter. Although Jesus became recognized as knowing the scriptures, his townspeople are filled with queries: "Where did this man get all this?" Jesus taught with great wisdom and had done "mighty deeds." They can't believe their ears. They can't believe their eyes. How can this be? His own people resented this *self-proclaimed prophet*. Where does this resistance to goodness and truth come from?

Expectations can be hard to give up. Jesus taught a different kind of relating to God than the people were familiar with. God was a loving, personal God who cares deeply for all God's creation. Most importantly, God dwells in the midst of God's people. His reign is breaking in as Jesus speaks.

The prophet is not some fortune teller. The prophet speaks for God in the midst of God's people. What marks the prophet, Jesus, in particular, is his deep relationship with God. It is from this relationship that Jesus draws his wisdom and performs his mighty deeds. Confident of his intimacy with God, Jesus continues to spread the *good news*.

It would be tempting to say that there are no prophets among us

today; that God has ceased speaking to his creation through such figures. Yet Jesus has let us know that God does indeed speak to his people today. His Spirit is with us. His Spirit speaks through many people of faith and good will in so many ways. He calls each of us to be prophetic, to speak on God's behalf of gospel values.

The deeper our relationship with God through encounter with the scriptures and prayer, the more our lives can speak for God. Our lives need to show the effects of God's work in our lives. How we love and respect others is key to our being able to speak for God.

The deeper our relationship with God, the more open and responsive we ourselves will be to others – at home, in our neighborhoods, in the market place, in our churches – when they speak to us in God's name, even when they don't know that, about gospel values that we might be missing. Like the folks of Jesus' home town, we, too, can allow our familiarity and prejudices to dismiss the prophet who is pointing to God's way. Listen for the prophet wherever he or she might be.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ Who are the prophets in your life and how have they helped you know God?
- ◆ When have you felt yourself resisting goodness or truth? What was that all about?
- ◆ Name someone whose way of living has commanded your attention and challenged you to evaluate your own.
- ◆ How easy or difficult is it for you to think of your life as prophetic?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Seek out a spiritual director who can help you discern God's actions and promptings in your life. Consult with your pastor or diocesan office on how to go about identifying a spiritual director.
- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. Get in touch with the challenging voices of those around

you. Listen for the goodness and truth of what they might be saying however uncomfortable that might be. Not all who might pretend to be speaking for God do so. Listen for how God might respond to those voices. Listen for how God might speak to you in this time of prayer.

- ◆ Read the Vatican II document on the **Church in the Modern World** (Go to: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents and click on the link “*Gaudium et Spes*”) and deepen your appreciation for how the laity are called to prophetic action in the world.

CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader invites the community to a time of silent prayer. After some minutes, a member prays as follows on behalf of all.)

Member: God of love and mercy, you call us to be your people, you gift us with your abundant grace. Make us a holy people, radiating the fullness of your love. Form us more deeply into community, a people who care, expressing your compassion. Remind us, day after day, of our baptismal call to serve with joy and courage. Teach us to grow in wisdom and grace and joy in your presence. Through Jesus and in your Spirit, we make this prayer.

All: Amen.

Called and Gifted for the Third Millennium,
United States Catholic Conference, Washington, D.C.

(Members join in singing, "Amazing Grace". The song may be found on the Internet. When the song is complete, the leader invites prayers of praise, thanksgiving and petition. To each prayer, members respond, "Lord, you are our strength." When these prayers are complete, the leader takes up the Cross, holds it for a minute and then passes it to another member and so on. When the Cross is returned to the table, members stand and join hands. The session concludes with the praying of the Lord's Prayer and the exchange of the sign of peace.)