

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Feb 5th 2014

The earlier passages of the gospel of Mark which we have encountered in recent days depict Jesus the miracle worker, Jesus the healer, Jesus the teacher. This rapid succession of mighty deeds and words comes to an abrupt halt as Jesus returns to his native place, to Nazareth. The astonishing account we hear today depicts Jesus' "friends and neighbors" from his growing up years as clearly aware of all that he has been saying and doing. They remain impressed with his Sabbath teaching. Then, to our surprise, the gospel reveals their heart-felt reaction to Jesus: "And they took offense at him."

What must it have been like for Jesus to return home and to receive such an unwelcome reception from those who knew him best? The gospel text leaves no doubt: "He was amazed at their lack of faith."

How many of us have had the blessing of the company of friends along the journey of faith, soul-friends, companions who seek the way of Jesus, only to be coldly received by family members and other kinds of friends? Perhaps the maturing of our commitment to Jesus becomes a source of isolation and distance at family gatherings. Perhaps a new and growing faith finds us parting company with old friends, friends from former times and former ways. What do we do with that isolation and aloneness, with the sorrow that rises in our hearts? Jesus stands ready to receive from us these experiences so that, as one who has truly walked this path before, he may console us and draw us into a place of communion and love with him.

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