

## Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Jan 31st 2018

Memorial of Saint John Bosco, Priest

“A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house.”

Mark

Everyone who has lived in a small town or some other tight knit social community can empathize with Jesus in today's gospel. Boy does Nazareth sound like my home town!

Remember the stereotypes that made it hard to escape from the stigma of your ancestors and relatives, just like Jesus? Smiths were smart. Joneses were athletic. Andersons were hardworking but not very bright etc. I remember one small town where the cops arrested a man from a family of petty criminals for some minor offense. He helpfully told them to arrest his identical twin this time. Even the family was comfortable with its bum rap!

Why should we be surprised that Jesus had to get out of town to fulfill his mission?

It's good to reflect on how often God selects unlikely messengers from unpromising places for important tasks. Change “prophet” to “saint” and consider the following:

The wounded Basque soldier who went to elementary school in his 30's after finding God then started the greatest Catholic religious order.

The teen-age girl who had a vision that God sent her to save France.

The peasant girl in the Pyrenees Mountains and the three peasant children in Portugal to whom the Blessed Virgin appeared with important messages for the world.

The farmer's son from the village of Sotto il Monte, Italy who became our greatest modern pope or, if you prefer, the Polish army officer's son who might also claim that title.

This list could go on but it seems that God often entrusts great deeds to people from obscure origins like the Holy Family's. He also sends humbler prophets and saints to communities everywhere. Know any of them?

Even those of us who will never be saints or prophets can find ourselves unexpectedly caught up in prophetic work. It still blows my mind that hundreds of thousands of people worldwide daily read reflections written by the ordinary employees of a modest-sized university in Nebraska.

Today's gospel teaches us to respond to the saints and prophets in our midst rather than reject them because they're just like us. If God can recognize them, so can we. Start looking – and thanks for sharing in this prophetic ministry.

