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Reflection Date: July y, 2024 - 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Astonished and Amazed!

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The gospel reading for the [Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time](#) tells of when, early in his public life, Jesus came back to his hometown. Evidently, he anticipated a warm reception from his former neighbors. After all, they knew him, they liked him, some had played with him as children. He had probably made household items for many of them in his trade as a carpenter. But this is how they viewed Jesus, as a carpenter, and they were “astonished” when he taught in the synagogue. Who does he think he is, this ordinary guy who was a maker of furniture, not a healer or a teacher? So “they took offense at him.” For his part, Jesus was “amazed” at their lack of faith, and he was probably disappointed and hurt. Jesus was not only a teacher, but he was also a learner, realizing that “a prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin.”



Before we are critical of the kin and neighbors of Jesus, let's ask ourselves if we have ever been surprised and taken back by the accomplishments of people we thought we knew. As a former teacher, I have sometimes been “astonished,” or at least surprised, when an average high school student became a doctor or lawyer or other professional. Last year, I was invited to attend the 50th reunion of the high school class of 1973 in Pensacola, Florida. It was a joy having conversations with men and women, hearing their life stories. I admit that I was “astonished” that a class cut-up who barely passed had become a very successful businessman. Another, who was bright but not a diligent student, rose in the Navy to captain a ship. Astonishment went hand in hand with gratitude and accolades.

Jesus was not recognized by his neighbors as a prophet. Do we recognize the prophets among us? Are we sometimes amazed at someone who, in our opinion, is an unlikely prophet? Do I take seriously that as a disciple of Jesus Christ and follower of Francis of Assisi, I am called sometimes to speak the truth to power, that is, to be prophetic? Today's scriptures remind us that prophets are often without honor, but also that “when I am weak, then I am strong,” for God's grace is sufficient.

Sr. Marie Lucey, OSF
Associate Director

Suggested Action:

Prophets, major and minor, speak and act to remind the community of God's presence as revealed in the gospel of Jesus. This month, take a prophetic action by making a call or sending a message to the Administration and/or Member of Congress on an issue important to you, as suggested in one of the [FAN newsletters](#).

Suggested Petitions:

That we may be open to being amazed by God's work in others, we pray...

That we may act prophetically when called for, trusting in God's grace to be our strength, we pray...

Prayer (excerpt from Sr. Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB, [Seasons of Your Heart](#)):

Dear friends,

Do not lose heart

The Kingdom will suffer if you do. . . .

It is only an illusion that our hearts are too weary.

It is only an illusion that we are too weak to keep promises.

For I know a Kingdom

that will rejoice forever

because of promises kept.

Happy Independence Day from Franciscan Action Network

Our newsletter is shortened this week due to the Independence Day holiday. As we commemorate July 4th, a symbol of independence and self-determination, we are reminded of the need to actively participate in this experiment of democracy in order to fulfill its greatest potential of peacemaking, liberty and justice for all.

Because Franciscans recognize our kinship with all, we know the struggle for freedom continues and we are called to address the barriers of systemic racism, exploitation and polarization that remain in our society today.

We keep in mind all those people, past and present, who promote and protect our rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We offer this prayer from the [Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg, FL](#):

God, source of all freedom,
this day is bright with the memory of those
who declared life and liberty are your gift to every human being.

Help us to continue a good work begun long ago.

Make our vision clear and our will strong:
that only in human solidarity will we find liberty,
and justice only in the honor that belongs to every life on earth.

Turn our hearts toward the family of nations:
to understand the ways of others, to offer friendship,
and to find safety only in the common good of all.



We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.