

Where's Jesus?

Deut. 18: 15-20; 7: 1 Cor. 7: 32-35; Mk. 1: 21-28

It was still early days in Jesus' public ministry and we read in Mark's gospel that Jesus entered the synagogue and encountered a man with an unclean spirit. Immediately, the unclean spirit recognized Jesus for who He was, calling Him 'the Holy One of God.'

When Jesus called the evil spirit out of the man, everyone in the synagogue were amazed and uncomprehending. The evil spirit recognized the divinity of Jesus but the people, including the scribes, did not. This was in spite of the ancient prophecy of Moses contained in the First Reading that God would raise up a Prophet from among their own kin and put His words in the Prophet's mouth so that he would speak according to the will of God. Jesus was the fulfillment of that prophesy. He spoke with divine authority that was astonishing to the scribes. And yet He was not recognized for who He was.

Likely, we have all heard the expression: 'I couldn't see the forest for the trees.' It speaks to the idea that, often, we can't see what is right in front of our faces because we are blinded by things that distract us. Remember the cartoon puzzle *Where's Waldo?* or those hidden object games on the computer?

The people in the synagogue did not recognize Jesus as the 'Holy One of God' even though they were well aware of the ancient prophesies, had heard Jesus' authoritative teachings, and had witnessed a prophetic sign.

In the Second Reading, St. Paul tells us that we must not be distracted by worldly concerns so much that we lose sight of what is really important; serving the Lord and journeying to our heavenly home. Paul tells us that we must not allow the trees to stop us from seeing the forest.

The scribes and the rest of the people in the synagogue did not recognize Jesus when He appeared in front of them. The question for us is: how can we possibly recognize Jesus when He does not come to us in the flesh? We recognize Him in the Word of God. We discern Him through the teachings of the Church. Most of all, we see Him in our brothers and sisters; especially the marginalized among us. But this last form of recognition is often the most difficult. We are in danger of being like the scribes and the others in the synagogue, blinded to what is in front of us.

Later in Mark's Gospel, Jesus reiterated the two great commandments from ancient Scriptures which form the foundation of Christianity: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' and 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' We show our love for God through our love for our neighbours.

In the Collect for the Mass this Sunday, we pray that God will grant us the grace 'to honour You with all our mind and love everyone in truth of heart.' We pray for the grace to recognize Jesus in those who need our love the most and the creativity to live out the two great commandments, even during this time of pandemic that forces us to distance ourselves from our neighbours.