

## FIRST READING – 14 B

A reading from the book of the Prophet Ezekiel.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

A spirit entered into me and set me on my feet;  
and I heard him speaking to me.

“Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel,  
to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me;  
they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day.  
The descendants are impudent and stubborn.  
I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them,  
“Thus says the Lord God.”

Whether they hear or refuse to hear,  
(for they are a rebellious house),  
they shall know that there has been a prophet among them.”

Pause for **THREE** seconds  
then look up at the people  
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## SECOND READING – 14 B

A reading from the second letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

Considering the exceptional character of the revelations,

to keep me from being too elated,

a thorn was given me in the flesh,

a messenger of Satan to torment me,

to keep me from being too elated.

Three times I appealed to the Lord about this,

that it would leave me,

but he said to me,

“My grace is sufficient for you,

for power is made perfect in weakness.”

So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses,

so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Therefore I am content

with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities

for the sake of Christ;

for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Pause for **THREE** seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## GOSPEL READING – 14 B

The Lord be with you.

*And with your spirit.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark.

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

Jesus came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him.  
On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue,  
and many who heard him were astounded.  
They said, “Where did this man get all this?  
What is this wisdom that has been given to him?  
What deeds of power are being done by his hands!  
Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary  
and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon,  
and are not his sisters here with us?”  
And they took offence at him.  
Then Jesus said to them,  
“A Prophet is not without honour,  
except in his hometown,  
and among his own kin, and in his own house.”  
And Jesus could do no deed of power there,  
except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them.  
And Jesus was amazed at their unbelief.  
Then he went about among the villages teaching.



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

### **Reading I: Ezekiel 2:2-5**

The choice of this reading is governed by the Gospel, which presents Jesus as a prophet rejected by his own people. Ezekiel likewise was sent to his own people and was warned that they might reject him.

This passage comes from the first of four different accounts of Ezekiel's call. He marks a new departure in Old Testament prophecy.

Ever since the first prophet (Amos), the concept of the "Spirit" had been avoided by the prophets. It was originally too much associated with ecstatic prophecy and Baal worship, but by Ezekiel's time it could safely be brought out and used, for by now it had been purified of its older, questionable associations.

Henceforth, endowment with the Spirit will be a characteristic of YHWH's prophets. Then it will pass into New Testament usage. "Son of man" simply means "man"; it is not a messianic title. It denotes a man in contrast to God, the human bearer of the divine message.

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### **Responsorial Psalm: 123:1-2, 2, 3-4**

This is a community psalm. A representative of Israel pleads for mercy on behalf of the whole community. What concrete situation is envisaged is no longer determinable.

It is a beautiful cry for help (note especially *servant/master, maid/mistress* as parables of Israel's relation to YHWH). But it is not easy to see precisely what connection the psalm has with the reading from Ezekiel.

Perhaps the point lies in the final stanza, in which case it can be taken as a lament on the part of the prophet that his message is rejected and he receives nothing but contempt from his hearers.

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### **Reading II: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

This passage is from the so-called severe or tearful letter (2 Cor 10-13), written at the height of Paul's controversy over the false apostles who were undermining his influence among the Corinthians. It thus takes us back to an earlier stage in the story of Paul's relationship with the Corinthians than that envisaged in the previous weeks' readings.

Paul had been unfavorably contrasted with the false prophets, who boasted of their ecstasies, visions, miracles, etc. The Apostle replies that whenever he was tempted to preen himself like his opponents, he was pulled up short by a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him from being elated.

There has been much discussion about the precise meaning of Paul's affliction. Here he speaks of being "buffeted" (the RSV "harass" is weak). This has often been taken to imply epilepsy, whose convulsions would throw him to the ground.

Others have deduced from Galatians 4:14-15 that Paul had some sort of ophthalmic condition. The

trouble is, as Lietzmann remarked, that the patient has been dead for nineteen hundred years! This makes diagnosis difficult.

The two references contradict each other and should probably be taken metaphorically. The Galatians would have given Paul their most valuable physical organs, that is, they would have done anything for him in his illness. The sickness did not literally throw him to the ground but left him depressed.

Karl Bonhoeffer, the father of Dietrich and a medical authority, thought that it might have been chronic depression, a phenomenon often accompanied by spells of supranormal activity. The elder Bonhoeffer characterized it as the result of a “hyperrhythmic temperament.” It seems safest to leave it at that.

Paul does not complain about it but uses it positively. It brings home to him that the grace of God, and only that, is all he needs to carry out his apostolic labors. His life is thus an epiphany of the cross of Christ. That is what it means for him to be an apostle

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### **Gospel: Mark 6:1-6**

Once again we must try to reconstruct the history of this pericope. It was claimed by the earlier form-critics that the whole episode was constructed as a vehicle for the saying about the prophet being honored everywhere except in his own country. But other features of the story have a ring of historicity.

Jesus was more than a prophet to the early Christian community, and therefore it is unlikely that they would have constructed a scene for such a saying without modifying it in the light of their post-Easter Christology.

The family relationships of Jesus also are surely based on historical reminiscence. Moreover, it is unlikely that the post-Easter Church would have recorded that Jesus *could* do no mighty work in his hometown unless this had been the case.

So we may presume an authentic memory of an occasion when Jesus was rejected in his own native town. The memory was then cast into narrative form by the primitive community in order to reassure itself when the kerygma was rejected by their own people. Their Master had suffered a like fate.

Finally, Mark takes the story, adds verse 1 as an introductory link and verse 6b as a generalizing conclusion. The exceptive qualification in verse 5b has clearly been added to mitigate the offense in verse 5a, though it is unclear whether this addition was made by Mark or by the pre-Markan tradition.

By inserting this pericope in its present position (Luke has another version of the same episode right at the beginning of the ministry), Mark introduces one of his reminders of the impending passion into the early part of his narrative (see 3:6, which, like this episode, also occurs at the end of a major structural section of the Gospel).

Mark is thus telling his readers that Jesus was not merely a successful wonder-worker; even his miraculous deeds led to his rejection and to the cross.

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