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Father Cantalamessa on a Prophet Without Honor

Pontifical Household Preacher on This Sunday's Gospel

ROME, JULY 7, 2006 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a translation of a commentary by Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher to the Pontifical Household, on the liturgical readings for this Sunday, the 14th of Ordinary Time.

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And they took offense at him

When Jesus was already popular and famous because of his miracles and teaching, he returned one day to his place of origin, Nazareth, and as usual, he began to teach in the synagogue. However, this time there was no enthusiasm, no Hosanna!

More than listening to what he was saying and judging him accordingly, the people began to engage in inappropriate considerations. "Whence did he get this wisdom? He has not studied; we know him well; he is the carpenter, the son of Mary!" "And they took offense at him," that is, they had a problem in believing him because they knew him well.

Jesus commented bitterly: "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." This phrase has become proverbial in the abbreviated form: *Nemo propheta in patria*, no one is a prophet in his country. But this is only a curiosity. The evangelical passage also gives us an implicit warning which we can summarize thus: be careful not to commit the same mistake as the Nazarenes! In a certain sense, Jesus returns to his country every time his Gospel is proclaimed in the countries which were, at one time, the cradle of Christianity.

Our Italy, and Europe in general, are, for Christianity, what Nazareth was for Jesus: "the place where he was raised" (Christianity was born in Asia, but grew up in Europe, a bit like Jesus who was born in Bethlehem but was raised in Nazareth!) Today they run the same risk as the Nazarenes: not to recognize Jesus. The Constitutional Charter of the new united Europe is not the only place from which he is "expelled" at present.

The episode of the Gospel teaches us something important. Jesus leaves us free; he proposes his gifts, he does not impose them. That day, in face of the rejection of his fellow countrymen, Jesus did not give way to threats and invectives. He did not say, indignant, as it is said the African Publius Scipio did, when leaving Rome: "Ungrateful country, you will not have my bones!" He simply went to another place.

Once he was not received in a certain village. The indignant disciples suggested that fire be brought down from heaven, but Jesus turned and rebuked them (Luke 9:54).

That is how he acts also today. "God is timid." He has far more respect for our freedom than we ourselves have for one another's. This creates a great responsibility. St. Augustine said: "I am afraid of Jesus passing"

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(Timeo Jesum transeuntem). He might, in fact, pass without my realizing it, pass without my being ready to receive him.

His passing is always a passing of grace. Mark says succinctly that, having arrived in Nazareth on the Sabbath, Jesus "began to teach in the synagogue." However, the Gospel of Luke specifies also what he taught and said that Sabbath. He said he had come "to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

What Jesus proclaimed in the synagogue of Nazareth was, therefore, the first Christian jubilee of history, the first great "year of grace," of which all jubilees and "holy years" are a commemoration.

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