

# Find God in our weakness

14th Sunday of the Year (July 6):  
(R3) Mark 6:1-6; (R1) Ezekiel 2:2-5;  
(R2) 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

After Jesus had begun his public ministry, he returned to Nazareth, his hometown. On the Sabbath, he went to the synagogue to teach. The people were astonished at his wisdom and miracles because they saw him as a local man like themselves. "Where did he get all this?" they asked. "Isn't this the carpenter, the Son of Mary, a brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters our neighbors here?"

So the citizens of Nazareth were offended that Jesus presumed to teach them! In reply Jesus said, "No prophet is without honor except in his native place." Because of their unbelief, he could work no great miracles among them; all he did was cure a few of the sick by laying hands on them. Jesus was helpless because of the people's lack of faith.

We need to recognize that helplessness usually describes an attitude and not a situation. We are never really helpless. There are eight words that, when used in a positive and affirming sense, can transform our attitude and life. Those eight words are: I AM, I CAN, I WILL, I BELIEVE. Those eight words are powerful words in any person's vocabulary. But the catch is that these eight words can't stand alone. Each one is just the beginning of a phrase. How each person ends that phrase will decide what that person's identity, self-image, competency, character, will and motivation are.

Do you say, "I am a winner!" or "I am a person of value!"? Or do you say, "I am a loser!" or "I am not good enough!"? How you finish these phrases reflects who you are and what you will get out of life. St. Paul had his thorn in the flesh. He could



Father **Albert** Shamon

## A word for Sunday

not get rid of it. But he didn't let it defeat him.

We need to recognize, in the second place, that it is in our weakness where we meet God's strength. Imagine if Jesus had been successful in his hometown. Might there not have been the temptation to settle down there? After all, there is no place like home. Jesus could have opened his own tabernacle in Nazareth — with the crutches of those he had healed lined up around the walls. He could have opened a seminary and devoted more time to training his disciples for the ministry to which he had called them. Since it was his hometown he could have looked after his mother, Mary. More significantly, he could have avoided Jerusalem and the beatings and the cross. The most fortunate thing for those of us who know Jesus as our Savior and Lord may be that he could not go home. When you come to one of life's difficult moments, when you are most aware of your weakness, look for God's strength.

Finally, we need to acknowledge that a claim of helplessness is the ultimate blasphemy against God. To say we are helpless is to say that God doesn't know about or care about our situation or is powerless

to help us. That's nonsense. Of course God knows, of course God cares, of course God is able to do for us all that we need for him to do.

Professor Robert Webber delivered a chapel message at Wheaton College during the 1970s, when the Death of God movement had reached its peak. He spoke on the commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." We usually interpret that commandment in a narrow sense of prohibiting swearing, said Webber, but there is much more to it than that. He proceeded to expand its meaning to "never live as though God does not exist." Or stated positively, "Always live in awareness of God's existence." If you claim to be helpless, you are taking God's name in vain.

As one author put it: God knows our name, the number of hairs on our head. He holds our hand in his hand. He supplies all our needs. A claim to be helpless is a blasphemy against God. We are never helpless because God is with us.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

## Daily Readings

Monday, July 7  
Genesis 28:10-22A  
Psalms 91:1-4, 14-15  
Matthew 9:18-26

Tuesday, July 8  
Genesis 32:23-33  
Psalms 17:1-3, 6-8, 15  
Matthew 9:32-38

Wednesday, July 9  
Genesis 41:55-57  
42:5-7A, 17-24A  
Psalms 33:2-3,  
10-11, 18-19  
Matthew 10:1-7

Thursday, July 10  
Genesis 44:18-21  
23B-29, 45:1-5  
Psalms 105:16-21  
Matthew 10:7-15

Friday, July 11  
Genesis 46:1-7, 28-30  
Psalms 37:3-4, 18-19  
Matthew 10:16-23

Saturday, July 12  
Genesis 49:29-32, 50:15-26A  
Psalms 105:1-4, 6-7  
Matthew 10:24-33

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