

## Sunday 08 July 2018: Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*A prophet is despised only in his own country*



Long neglected because of its brevity, the Gospel of Mark is now recognised to be a work of genius. Mark's was the first gospel to be written. Combining something of the freshness of the earliest memories of Jesus' life with an ordered presentation of his material, Mark intends to provide a guide to authentic discipleship – as a following of the crucified Saviour. Today's incident – which tells of the rejection of Jesus by the people of his own town, at the end of his ministry in Galilee - illustrates this. Mark's telling of the story of Jesus comes to its climax with the Saviour's passion – the rejection of the Messiah by God's own people. It seems that Mark was writing for the Christians of Rome in the decade of the first persecutions, calling them to be true disciples of the crucified Christ.

Today's gospel also conveys the sense of immediacy often present in Mark. We have an echo of the reaction of those who witnessed the event (the 'disciples' who accompanied Jesus to his "home town") – they are surprised and disconcerted by the very human reaction of Jesus. Rejected by the people of 'his own country' and 'his own relations', Jesus seems to be disarmed, so that 'he could work no miracle there'. A very human situation and a typical human reaction – Jesus truly became one of us, our brother. What the gospel describes is so true to life that Jesus' summing up has become a proverb: 'No honour for prophets among their own'...

Extract by John Thornhill sm - read more at [The Emmaus Series](#) | Image courtesy of [Herman oleon Clipart](#)

## NAIDOC Week

The origins of NAIDOC Week (07 - 15 July) came out of a Day of Mourning for the destruction and despoliation of Indigenous Australians which followed the arrival of the first fleet. It later became also a celebration of Indigenous and Islander culture. Each year it offers a theme that points to a key part of Indigenous culture. It offers space for reflection not only by Indigenous but by all Australians.

This year the theme proposed for NAIDOC week is 'Because of her, we can'. It points to the central role played by women in the nurturing of Indigenous culture and celebrates the strong women who have fought for their people's rights. It is timely for all Australians. Recently the #Me Too movement has drawn attention to the ways in which many women have been sexually abused by men in positions of power over them. It has called out disrespect.

We have recently become more aware, too, of the extent of domestic violence in Australia, and that it is mostly perpetrated by men against women and children. This form of disrespect, once wretched in silence, has been spoken of courageously and effectively. In this area, as in the #Me Too movement, we have been struck, not only by the outrageous treatment of women, but also by their strength and resilience and by the courage of those who have described their experience.

Disrespect for Indigenous women has been part of the national DNA. As part of policy for generations many women's children were routinely taken away from them, and this remains the default response to domestic problems in Indigenous communities. Government policies and administration have consistently ignored women's part in holding together families and communities often under great pressure.

For these reasons it is the right time to celebrate the strong women who have spoken truth to power in Australia - from Truganini to Evelyn Scott, Mum Shirl and Pat O'Shane, to name some of the best known. Often dismissed because they were female as well as Indigenous, they gave hope to others.

In the Jesuit Social Services Men's Project we attempt to address the systematic reasons for the domestic violence suffered both by Indigenous and other Australian women, in the hope of changing the toxic male culture which lies at its root. Violence to women is rooted in the weakness of men and not in their strength. The Indigenous women of great strength and commitment to their people whom we meet in our work inspire us.

*Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ*