

- This is a favorite Gospel passage, of course, for non-Catholics to argue against our doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary... this speaking about “brothers and sisters” of Jesus.
- But it was common in Jesus’ time and place to call extended family “brothers” and “sisters”, especially when they could trace all their lines to one great or well-known patriarch.
- In Genesis, for example, Abraham calls Lot his “brother”, although Abraham was actually Lot’s uncle.
- And in 1Chronicles we read: *“The sons of Mahli [were] Eleazar and Kish. Eleazar died having ...only daughters; their brothers, the sons of Kish, married them.”* (1 Chronicles 23:21-22) So these were the girls’ first cousins, though called “brothers”. Thanks to the commentator Brian Pitre for pointing that one out.
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- That Mary had no other children becomes clear in John’s Gospel, because, from the cross, Jesus entrusts her to the care of St. John—who is certainly not Jesus’ brother.
- If Mary had other children, by Jewish Law—and simply by natural filial affection—they would have taken care of her.
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- Also, though James the Less is called “the brother of Jesus”, we read in other places that James was the son of the man Alphaeus, and the son of a Mary other than Jesus’ mother.
- Remember that “Mary”—or really, “Miriam”—was a very common name, after the original Miriam who was sister of Moses and the great heroine of the Jewish people.
- It’s like when being in Mexico or Latin America.; there are “Marias” everywhere.

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- This is one demonstration of why it is so important to know the bases for the Church’s teaching.
  - Far too often we Catholics don’t know the scripture or the basis of our teachings well; we just trust in the Church to have it right.
  - But this can be used adversely, and is a reason many leave the faith when a non-Catholic tosses out a verse like that of today—

speaking of “brothers and sisters” of Jesus—to challenge us...as if the Church somehow “missed” this verse these 2000 years.

- So trust the Church, and know her faith, which St. Paul affirms is *“the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.”* (1 Timothy 3:15)...for she has the promise of Christ Himself that He will be with her ‘til His Second Coming.

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- Now much of our readings today touch upon the sin of pride.
  - Not the pride taken at a child’s accomplishments and the like, but that pride by which we falsely elevate ourselves above others... and, in worse case, even above God Himself.
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  - This pride is what drives the Nazarenes in the Gospel today to take offense at Jesus, even though Jesus worked wonders and taught the word of God in ways never heard before.
  - We see this newness because they themselves say: *“Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands!”*
  - Yet...pride and jealousy enter.
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  - Remember that, as in any community, there were layers of society—the important and powerful...then probably a merchant middle class of sorts...and finally the lowly commoners—the poor uneducated manual laborers.
  - Jesus was one of these last and least ones—the poor, sweaty, calloused-handed carpenter—the maker of plows and carts and the like
  - How dare He be better, wiser, more powerful!...despite the fact that He proves this in spades!
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  - All we have to do is think of our own lives. Perhaps a bit of envy at how someone we knew, perhaps in high school, far excelled us. Or, perhaps, how you may have been treated dismissively by someone you far excelled.

- There may have been some resentment, too, that Jesus had moved to Capernaum on the shore of the Sea of Galilee when He began His ministry and wonder working.
- “Oh...and now Mr. Wonderful comes to bless us with his presence!” kind of attitude...and thus Mark’s “they took offense at him” comment.

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- One thing interesting is that He seems a surprise to them all... indicating Jesus likely never publicly manifested His great power and wisdom during His early life in Nazareth... and so we see yet once again the tremendous humility of God—years and years of sweaty toil though He was Creator of Heaven and earth.
  - Secondly in this story we note Jesus’ compassion, that though the natives of the town lacked the faith to draw Him to do mighty deeds, He nevertheless had pity on some of the sick and healed them.
  - And then Mark tells us that Jesus “...*was amazed at their lack of faith.*”
  - Even when confronted by these healings, they refuse to set aside their pride and accept Him as the prophet—the one sent by God—that He was.

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- Pride, as it was here, is often our defense against our own insecurities.
  - But we—in imitation of Jesus—are called to lay aside pride of place and become the servants of all.
  - That service sometimes calls us to leadership or other high positions, but our attitude must always be to serve—to serve God first in worship and obedience to His moral law and instruction, and then to serve humanity in the persons of those around us and in those in great need.
  - As Jesus came to serve and not to be served, we as Christians and His disciples are to go forth with like attitude.
  - For He teaches us: “*If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.*” (Mark 9:35)...remembering His words “*Truly,*

*I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40)*

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- *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5)*

Reading 1

[Ez 2:2-5](#)

As the LORD spoke to me, the spirit entered into me  
and set me on my feet,  
and I heard the one who was speaking say to me:  
Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites,  
rebels who have rebelled against me;  
they and their ancestors have revolted against me to this very day.  
Hard of face and obstinate of heart  
are they to whom I am sending you.  
But you shall say to them: Thus says the LORD GOD!  
And whether they heed or resist—for they are a rebellious house—  
they shall know that a prophet has been among them.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 123:1-2, 2, 3-4](#)

R. (2cd) **Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.**

To you I lift up my eyes  
who are enthroned in heaven —

As the eyes of servants  
are on the hands of their masters.

R. **Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.**

As the eyes of a maid  
are on the hands of her mistress,  
So are our eyes on the LORD, our God,  
till he have pity on us.

R. **Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.**

Have pity on us, O LORD, have pity on us,  
for we are more than sated with contempt;  
our souls are more than sated  
with the mockery of the arrogant,  
with the contempt of the proud.

R. **Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.**

Themes: Attentiveness to God & His Word; challenges by the world
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Reading II

[2 Cor 12:7-10](#)

Brothers and sisters:

That I, Paul, might not become too elated,  
because of the abundance of the revelations,  
a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan,

to beat me, to keep me from being too elated.

Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."

I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me.

Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Themes: Paul's eye ailment; faithful not free of troubles; find contentment in God, not in ease

Gospel

[Mk 6:1-6](#)

Jesus departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples.

When the Sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished.

They said, "Where did this man get all this?

What kind of wisdom has been given him?

What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands!

Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?

And are not his sisters here with us?"

And they took offense at him.

Jesus said to them,

"A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house."

So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them.

He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Themes: Brothers of Jesus/virginity of Mary; compassion in curing despite lack of faith;