

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In today's Gospel we hear how, in Capernaum, Jesus amazes the people by his words and actions. This same Jesus speaks to us and is active in our midst.



What is this? A new teaching; and with authority!

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

God's words will be placed on the lips of a Moses-like prophet who is raised up from among his kinsfolk.

1 Corinthians 7:32-35

Paul sees the unmarried person as single-mindedly committed to the Lord.

Mark 1:21-28

Jesus speaks with an authority that leaves the people spellbound, and with a similar authority he drives out evil spirits.

Reflection

The incident in today's Gospel is extraordinary; almost overpowering. It all happens in the synagogue. The synagogue was the official place where the Law was taught - as interpreted by authorised teachers.

Anyway, it's a Sabbath day, the day on which practicing Jews come together to listen to the explanations of their leaders. It's in this context that Jesus begins to teach for the first time.

Mark doesn't tell us what Jesus said. That's not really what's important here. What's genuinely significant is the impact of Jesus' words and presence: he triggers **astonishment** and **admiration**.

The people see something special in Jesus; something they haven't found in their own religious teachers. Jesus certainly doesn't teach like the scribes. He teaches, it says, **with authority**.

The learned scribes adhered to tradition, quoting famous teachers of the past; their authority derived from being able to interpret the Law plainly. The authority of Jesus was something quite different: his influence didn't come from any established interpretation; it wasn't based on tradition. The authority of Jesus was full of the life-giving Spirit of God: "But **I** say to you"



All of a sudden this is underlined in the synagogue. A man possessed by an evil spirit cried out; he interrupted the teaching of Jesus. He couldn't even bear to hear what Jesus is saying. He was terrified. He shouts out: "Have you come to destroy us?" The strange thing is that the man felt okay listening to the teaching of the scribes. Why did he now feel threatened?

Jesus certainly hadn't come to destroy anyone. Quite to the opposite: his authority was in giving life to people. His teaching humanised people; it freed them from enslavement of any kind. His words inspired trust in God. His message is the best news that a tormented soul can hear. When Jesus healed the man possessed, the people exclaimed: "**This is a new teaching—with authority behind it**" – there was a certain power backing it.

Nowadays, opinion polls seem to suggest that the teaching of the church is losing authority and credibility. We're finding that it's not enough to speak authoritatively, in order to announce the good news from God. That doesn't seem to be enough, nowadays, just to transmit tradition correctly: that doesn't open hearts to the happiness of the faith; to the joy of the Gospel.

We really do need is a new teaching.

We're not scribes; we're disciples of Jesus. We've got to spread a message of Jesus, not our own traditions. We've got to teach by healing lives, not by indoctrinating people's minds. We've got to infuse people with the spirit of Jesus, not just our own theology.



With authority behind it!

WORDSEARCH

F	O	N	N	R	T	I	T	P	S	CAPERNAUM	SABBATH	SYNAGOGUE
Q	O	A	S	E	B	I	R	C	S	TEACH	SCRIBES	UNCLEAN
U	M	L	I	C	R	I	A	H	S	SPIRIT	DESTROY	HOLY
I	N	U	L	I	R	P	Y	T	R	QUIET	ORDERS	OBEY
Y	Q	C	P	O	E	Y	E	A	E			
O	L	S	L	R	W	A	E	B	D			
H	H	O	N	E	C	E	R	B	R			
M	N	A	H	H	A	O	R	A	O			
E	U	G	O	G	A	N	Y	S	N			
M	Y	O	R	T	S	E	D	E	O			



At the moment there is no obligation to attend Mass.

- It is good that so many are careful of their own and other people's health at this critical time by not coming to Mass.
- It is also good that many people join in streamed Masses.
- It is also good that some people feel able to participate physically at Mass and keep the liturgy alive in St Francis Parish.

When this pandemic is over, may we all come together again as envisioned in the words of the Vatican II document on the Sacred Liturgy:

"Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism."

(Sacrosanctum Concilium 16)