

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

God's word comes to us in various ways and it is very powerful and effective in our lives and will bear fruit in plenty. The word of God clings to the human person, penetrates deeply into our hearts giving us new insights and applies it fully to our lives. God expects us to be conscious of the working of this word in our lives and respond to it. His word is a healing word. It purifies the person and takes away all the stains. It is a prophetic word which leads the person towards the values of God against the values of the world. It is a reconciling word which keeps away all divisions and brings unity in the community.

In the Gospel, we see the special day in the life of Jesus. He was a preacher, teacher, healer and a man of prayer. Today's passage tells us about Jesus as He is preaching and teaching the word of God in the Synagogue in Capernaum. It also demonstrates the power and authority of Jesus as He expels an unclean spirit from a man and heals him. People look at him with admiration because He spoke with authority and power. On this Sabbath day Jesus was probably invited by the local rabbi to address the people who had come to pray in the synagogue. In the synagogue, anyone could be invited to come forward to preach.

In today's Gospel, we heard that Jesus entered the synagogue and taught in Capernaum. Those who heard Him were astonished at His teachings because He taught with authority and not like the scribes who normally taught in that place. Here, the authority of Jesus is compared to a rabbi who had the power to impose a decision with a binding authority. The authority of Jesus is seen throughout the New Testament where he overthrows the rule of Satan and He establishes the invisible Kingdom of God on the earth.

Jesus taught the people about the love of God from His heart as He was close to His father. He taught with absolute conviction and authority in His message because He was aware that His message was in accordance with the mind of God. In the life of St Francis of Assisi; it is said that one day he called a brother and said let us go to teach the good news in the town. Both of them set out and just walked around the town without uttering a word of preaching. Instead they greeted everyone on the way and had kind words for the onlookers. When the brother asked Francis when they would stop to preach, he replied that he was preaching to people in this entire walk. Jesus is presented to us today as a preacher. He preached the word of God and He did it carefully. He preached

about God and His saving work among the people chosen by Him. He would have explained the presence of God among them and his own role as God's chosen one. There was something attractive in His teaching for which they longed to listen to Him.

Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to be silent and to come out of the man. In this miracle Jesus showed the upper hand without any struggle and did the healing of the possessed person. This convincing exercise of power only adds further amazement to the people. Once that happened, those who were present were filled with awe and wonder. Their reaction was one of fear and astonishment. They said to one another that it was a new teaching, where a person could use His power and authority. He had command even over the unclean spirits, and they obeyed Him. The people had never seen such great power, nor ever heard of it since the days of Moses.

Later, during His public life when the soldiers go to arrest Him but went back empty handed, they told the authorities that no one spoke like Him so they could not arrest Him. The authority of Jesus went beyond performing miracles in the visible world. He had the authority over the invisible world as much as over the visible one. It was no wonder that the people considered Jesus to be the promised prophet.

His teachings were always intended to bring about a positive change in the hearts of people. For this reason Jesus performed healing miracles together with his teaching, to show that his primary concern is to change the human person physically and spiritually. As we reflect this week upon this spiritual knowledge and understanding of the Word of God, let us remember the calling that each one of us has received as children of God through the Sacrament of Baptism and let us answer that calling by living our vocations without anxieties and place our faith, hope and trust in Jesus who has all authority as the only begotten Son of God. So, let us all pray today that Jesus, with His growth-inducing authority will be a real source of liberation for us. May He free us from all those spirits which make us deaf, dumb, blind and lame in life and paralyzed by fear.

(In the Gospel, Mark speaks in detail the first day in the public life of Jesus. It was a Sabbath Day, when Jesus began his ministry with his fellow townsmen in the synagogue in Capernaum. The synagogue was not necessarily a building. It was a gathering of the faithful for the purpose of studying the Scriptures and the synagogue service was basically prayer service. It was not uncommon for these meeting to take place in a home.)