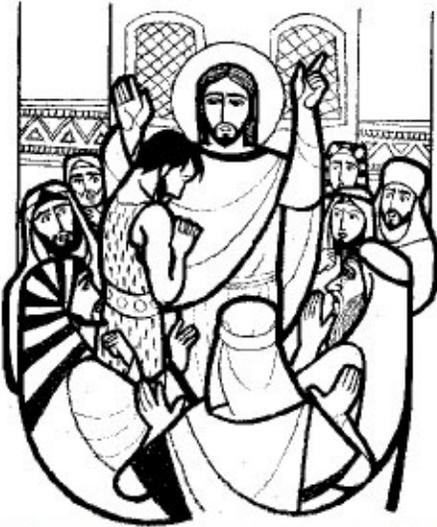


Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community
4TH ORDINARY SUNDAY

Cycle B - January 31, 2020



He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him...

OPENING PRAYER

Guide: *Here I am, Lord, to do your will.*

All: **I have waited, waited for the Lord, and he bent down toward me and heard my cry. And he gave me a new song, a hymn to our God.**

Leader: I announced your justice in the vast assembly; I did not restrain my lips, as you O Lord know.

All: **In the scroll it is written for me to do your will, O my God. It is my delight, and your law is within my heart!**

Guide: *We invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send, Lord your spirit and renew the face of the earth.

Oh God, that you have instructed the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us through the same spirit that always enjoy her divine consolation. By Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FIRST READING [Deuteronomy 18 (15-20)]

Moses spoke to all the people, saying:

“A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from among your own kin; to him you shall listen. This is exactly what you requested of the Lord, your God, at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let us not again hear the voice of the Lord, our God, nor see this great fire any more, lest we die.’

And the Lord said to me, ‘This was well said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kin, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him. Whoever will not listen to my words which he speaks in my name, I myself will make him answer for it.

But if a prophet presumes to speak in my name an oracle that I have not commanded him to speak, or speaks in the name of other gods, he shall die.’”

The Canaanites turned to sorcerers to consult their decisions. They were mysterious rites that fascinated these primitive men. The Israelite, upon entering the Promised Land, witnessed these practices and allowed themselves to be captivated, coming to look for fortune-tellers who would tell them about the future. But God does not want his people to fall for this nonsense and he has prepared a leader for him who will lead him with success and security. A prophet who does not deceive with tricks and falsehoods. The people will be able to count on a guide who will illuminate them because it will be the light itself: Jesus Christ.

The word spoken by Jesus so many centuries ago still reverberates with its truth, but there are still those who prefer to ignore it and decide to resort to these absurd practices of divination. There are still many who call themselves Christians and read the horoscope daily and continue to resort to the wisdom of men. The Word of God is very clear when it says: "... I will hold him accountable ...". Here it is worth remembering what God inspired the prophet: "Cursed is the man who puts his trust in men!" There is no doubt what God expects of us: to love him above all things and put all our trust in him.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (No. 2115) says: "... the Christian attitude consists in surrendering with confidence into the hands of providence in regard to the future and in abandoning all unhealthy curiosity ..."

- (1) Does God call ordinary people or extraordinary people to be his prophets?
- (2) Give names of people who could be recognized as prophets in our time.
- (3) What have these people done? What would prevent you from doing something similar?
- (4) Try to remember a time when God put words in your mouth. Share.
- (5) Do you think that reading the horoscope or paying attention to astrologers is harmless?

SECOND READING [1 Corinthians 7 (32-35)]

Brothers and sisters:

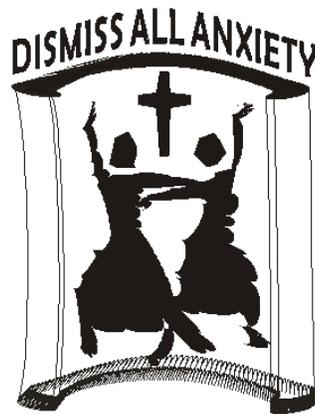
I should like you to be free of anxieties.

An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided.

An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit.

A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction.



Saint Paul begins by saying that he would like to spare us worries, but immediately afterwards he speaks to us about how one should worry about the things of the Lord. And there are two types of concerns, those that marriage brings with it and those who live their consecrated life to God. Paul advises that if one does not marry and is called by God to be celibate, do not hesitate for a moment to surrender to the Lord. That if he is faithful to his vocation, it will be much better for him ... and for the faithful. Because his only concern will be his response to God's call to service.

Paul is not against marriage. In this same chapter he speaks that marriage is better for those who need to live in company. He comes to warn against selfish singleness that will inevitably lead to damnation. What gives value to celibacy is exclusive dedication to God, it is a renunciation of having a family, being loved and cared for by a wife and enjoying the joy of children. It is a delivery for which God grants a special grace. Because it is not easy to control your instincts and serve with joy. The person who sacrifices his feelings out of love for God does not destroy them, but elevates them, transforms them into a living and permanent offering so that his dedication contributes better to the redemption of humanity.

- (1) Do you think you are the only person who has concerns? Do you recognize that others also have concerns?
- (2) What could we do to prevent worry from turning into distress?
- (3) What virtue could we cultivate and develop to control our anxieties?
- (4) Many times the laity have an opinion about the celibacy of priests. Obviously that is their "problem". Do you remember hearing a priest giving the same opinion?
- (5) Discuss the pros and cons that would exist if the priests married. Take stock.
- (6) For married couples: Do you help your partner to respond to God's call more effectively?



GOSPEL [Mark 1 (21-28)]

Then they came to Capernaum, and on the sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught.

The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.

In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to

destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

Jesus rebuked him and said, “Quiet! Come out of him!”

The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him.

All were amazed and asked one another, “What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.”

His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

One of the most important characteristics of Jesus Christ was that of Teacher. Evangelists always emphasize that Jesus taught and preached, and that he did it without hesitation, he did it with authority. The other acts and gestures, such as healing and casting out demons, were a complement to his Master's mission. They served to give even more power to his teachings, since he confirmed with extraordinary deeds the sanctifying power that was contained in his teachings. Nobody taught in Israel, nor in the whole world as he did. On one occasion, Peter, interpreting the feelings of his fellow disciples, said to him: “Where else could we go? If you have words of eternal life”. Then, we, like Peter, will have to trust the only teacher who is at the same time, light, truth and way.

Jesus Christ, before returning to heaven, instituted the Church and gave her full powers. Among these powers is that of the Magisterium. The Church is a Holy Teacher because she shows us, in the name of Christ, the way to follow. Jesus anticipated this when he proclaimed that whoever receives the one who carries his message is the one who will be receiving. The same would be with a rejection. It is not possible to live detached from the Mystical Body of Christ if we want to save ourselves. And to belong to that body it is necessary that we all have the same way of thinking... this is what we may call “communion.” And this becomes possible when the members of the Church listen to and put into practice the doctrine taught by the Magisterium of the Church (made up of the Pope and the bishops of the whole world).

(1) How was the authority of Jesus Christ confirmed at Capernaum? Do you need still more evidence?

(2) The demons in that man's body recognize Jesus Christ as "the Holy One of God." Do you realize what this means? Is it possible that we still see Jesus simply as an “extraordinary man”?

(3) There are still teachers who speak without authority, as it seems that the scribes of those times did. What can bring authority to a preacher?

(4) Review the first chapter of the Gospel according to Mark. Write down on paper everything that Jesus does in this first chapter. Does it seem like a little or a lot? What you think?

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father ...**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*