

Jesus is teacher, exorcist, and healer. In today's short Gospel passage, he taught on the sabbath and astonished people with his authority. When a man troubled by a demon interrupted Jesus, he "rebuked him and said, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!'" (Luke 4:35). The man tormented by an unclean spirit is healed. And in the brief verses that follow today's gospel, others see what Jesus has done and many who are sick are brought to Jesus for healing. The next morning, Jesus sets out to proclaim the Good News to other towns and villages. Through our baptism, we are called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

The role of teacher is perhaps best understood. When we baptize a child, we remind parents that they are the primary teachers of their children in matters of the faith. And with the pandemic changing how school is taking place, the call is for much more learning to take place in the home. Children learn by example and parents are most helpful when they can help a child to grow and mature to be a good person, one who cares and shares, and follows the example of Jesus.

Children learn what they live. This is a two-way street. If the example a parent sets is to criticize a child all the time, then the child may learn that negative trait and easily find fault with others. If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he or she learns to find love in the world. In the Gospel, Jesus teaches as one having authority. The words we speak as we try to teach others, have much greater weight and authority if they reflect a way of life that offers a positive witness to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Jesus expelled demons and even his own disciples who had been given authority to do so, at times, failed for their lack of faith. I recall Father Sean telling me about a visit to his nieces and nephews. His brother was worried because the children were spooked by something that scared them. Father Sean asked a few questions and found that his brother and sister-in-law were not setting a good example by teaching their children how to pray. He encouraged them to pray and this helped resolve the problem. We always need to invoke God's help in dealing with evil.

Pope Leo XIII lived in very turbulent times and asked everyone to pray to Saint Michael the Archangel as a powerful intercessor against evil.

Saint Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle,
be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil;
may God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou,
O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God,
cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl through the world
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

A special gift of the Holy Spirit is to heal. Most of us do not possess this gift. Jesus is the miracle worker, the giver of cures. However, by our care for others, we can offer great help and support. When you know of someone who is sick or suffering, pray for them. If circumstances allow, a visit or phone call can often do much good. My mother is almost 89 and many days she really feels her age. Yesterday, I called to speak with her and in the first few words, I knew she was not feeling well. We spoke for over an hour. In the course of the conversation, she told me of her weekly phone call to reach out to her best friend of 84 years. Her friend is a widow. All of the children have left the home and have families and careers of their own. She relies on a nurse to tend to her in her own home. She too has many aches and pains. But the weekly phone call always gives her a lift. It brightens her week. In the extended course of the phone call to my own mother, the longer we spoke, the more I could hear in her voice that she was feeling better.

Each Christian is called to help others come to know and love Jesus. With a caring heart, and a helping hand from God, we can proclaim the Good News by our words and our actions.