

GOSPEL

Mark 1:21-28

Jesus and his followers went as far as Capernaum, and as soon as the Sabbath came Jesus went to the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority.

In their synagogue just then there was a man possessed by an unclean spirit, and it shouted, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.' But Jesus said sharply, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking each other what it all meant. 'Here is a teaching that is new' they said 'and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him.' And his reputation rapidly spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.

HOMILY OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

29 January 2012

This Sunday's Gospel (Mk 1:21-28) presents to us Jesus, who was preaching on the Sabbath in the Synagogue of Capernaum, the little town on the Sea of Galilee where Peter and his brother Andrew lived. His teaching, which gave rise to wonder among the people, was followed by the deliverance of "a man with an unclean spirit" (v. 23), who recognized Jesus as "the Holy One of God", that is, the Messiah. In a short time his fame spread across the region which he passed through proclaiming the Kingdom of God and healing the sick of every kind: words and action. St John Chrysostom pointed out that the Lord "varies the mode of profiting his hearers, after miracles entering on words, and again from the instruction by his words passing to miracles" (Hom. in Matthæum 25, 1: PG 57, 328).

The words Jesus addresses to the people immediately give access to the will of the Father and to the truth about themselves. This was not the case for the scribes who instead had to make an effort to interpret the Sacred Scriptures with countless reflections.

Moreover Jesus united the efficacy of the word with the efficacy of the signs of deliverance from evil. St Athanasius notes that "for his charging evil spirits and their being driven forth, this deed is not of man, but of God"; indeed the Lord "drove away from men all diseases and infirmities"... Those "who saw his power... will no longer doubt whether this be the Son and Wisdom and Power of God?" (Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi 18,19: PG 25, 128 BC. 129 B).

The divine authority is not a force of nature. It is the power of the love of God that creates the universe and, becoming incarnate in the Only-Begotten Son, descending into our humanity, heals the world corrupted by sin. Romano Guardini wrote: "Jesus' entire existence is the translation of power into humility... here is the sovereignty which lowers itself into the form of a servant" (Il Potere, Brescia 1999, 141-142).

Authority, for human beings, often means possession, power, dominion and success. Instead for God authority means service, humility and love; it means entering into the logic of Jesus who stoops to wash his disciples' feet (cf. Jn 13:5), who seeks man's true good, who heals wounds, who is capable of a love so great that he gives his life, because he is Love. In one of her Letters St. Catherine of Siena wrote: "It is necessary for us to see and know, in truth, with the light of the faith, that God is supreme and eternal Love and cannot want anything but our good" (Ep. 13 in: Le Lettere, vol. 3, Bologna 1999, 206).

continued over page ►

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What does leadership and authority mean to you?



Heart: Have you ever encountered a servant leader? What made them different to other leaders? Describe your experience.



Hands: How can we practice turning power into humility in our daily lives?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be.’