

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time B2024

When God chose Moses to set the people of Israel free from slavery in Egypt and lead them to the Holy Land, it was a great honor. But, Moses knew that, as a human being, he would die one day. Even God knew that it will not be he who would eventually bring the Israelites in the Promised Land. However, the work for which he was instituted as leader had to continue even without him.

It is in that context that Moses speaks to the people in the first reading of today. He reveals to them that God will raise another prophet like him among their kin and will put his words in his mouth. It is in their interest to listen to his words and obey his commands lest they will be accountable before God for not having listened to him through the words of the prophet.

Though many prophets came one after another in Israel over the years and through the twist of Israel history, the people continued to hope that one day God will send a final prophet. They believed that the ultimate one will lead the people to the whole truth, reconcile them with God and with one another. It is that circumstance that the idea of Messiah grew in Israel until Jesus fulfilled that promise.

Thus, when our Lord came that day in the Synagogue of Capernaum on the Sabbath, he was invested with more than the power and the authority of Moses, according to God's promise. He spoke with such an authority that he was not like those who came before him. Such an authority has nothing to do with the power of weapons that forces people to do things against their will. It has nothing to do with the strength of persuasion that seduces people and pushes them to act in one or another.

God's authority is the power that comes from the Holy Spirit. It aims at healing the wounds of sin and at restoring the integrity of the human person. That power is operating in all the sacraments of the Church by making our Lord present at all the times when the sacrament is celebrated. Our Lord who speaks with authority is not alone; he is with the Father; he acts through the power of the Father who dwells in him and whose work he has come to perform.

The reason why the Father invested our Lord with power and authority was to heal the wounds of sins and restores the sick to full health. Where God's word breaks through in human history, announcing the kingdom of justice, love and peace, everything changes for the best and the reign of evil is destroyed. So, our Lord does by healing the sick, comforting the afflicted and casting out the demons. Our Lord and the devil are like two enemies who meet at the social gathering. As they hate each other, at first, they try to ignore each other, but, then the inevitable comes, they confront each other.

That is what happened in the Synagogue of Capernaum. Before our Lord came in, the possessed man was calm and looked normal like anyone else. Once our Lord started speaking, he disclosed himself and confronted him. But, the power and authority of our Lord overpowered him: "Quiet! Come out of him." And suddenly the possessed man was healed.

Brothers and Sisters, there are forces of evil and demons in our life too. Some forces of evil are outside of us while others are inside of us. Sometimes they can control our life. Think about pride, hatred, prejudice, racism, discrimination, greed, gluttony, lust and pornography. These are all powers that would destroy our life and rob us of the freedom, dignity and purpose God has for us. They can be like a storm out of control. We seem to be at their mercy. Then comes that moment when the sun starts to shine. The storm is over and the snow that had paralyzed us begins to melt.

That is like the power of our Lord in our life. Just as the snow gives us way to the strength of the sun, so the powers that seem dominate our life can recede before the power of our Lord. Our Lord can do for us what he did for that man in the Synagogue.

He can set us free and allow us to enjoy life again without oppression or persecution. Whatever might be the demons in our life, demons from the past or demons in the present, what our Lord did for that man in the Synagogue, he can do for us. He can do for you and for me because “he is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). He can do it for anyone who, recognizing his power and authority, acknowledges his demons and begs him for healing.

That brings us to the recommendation of St Paul that, married or unmarried, we remain attached to the Lord by offering ourselves to him totally and unreservedly. By doing so, we give witness to others that, whatever we might be doing in this world, the Kingdom of God is our ultimate value in the midst of the changing things of the world.

With such a consideration, St Paul does not condemn marriage or despise sex as inferior; nor does he belittle family life. What he wants is that we give priority to Christ in our lives without anxiety or distraction, according to the vocation of each one. Let us pray that the Lord may help us to belong to him without reservation or distraction. Let us recognize among us the one who has the power to cast out demons, who seeks to enter our hearts and lives, who wants to make us faithful and whole. Let us offer ourselves entirely to him.

Deuteronomy 18: 15-20; 1 Corinthians 7: 32-35; Mark 1: 21-28



Homily Date: January 28, 2024

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Document Name: 20240128homily.pdf