

4TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME B

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

HOMILY

After reading this Gospel at the “Friday night Gospel Share” those in attendance were given the opportunity to share what touched them and it was Chris Burger who began with his one-word contribution: “*authority*” When asked to shade more light, he simply said again “*authority*”

Now what how does power differ from authority? We know people can yield power causing others to submit to them. Q: Is this authority? Certainly no as it spells danger for me. We also know that those in positions of legitimate authority can also use power in harmful ways too. Authority, most people would agree, is something that is conferred by others in trust for the good of all. In the case of Jesus his authority is conferred unto him by God. One thing that is clear in today’s Gospel is that apart from religious leaders those who had no power or status welcomed Jesus’ authoritative presence. They found his authority life-giving and liberating. They were amazed at it and glorified God because of it. People acknowledged the authority of his teaching because it reached into their soul and spirit and gave them life. One person in particular in the synagogue that day who was burdened by his demons, found Jesus’ authoritative word truly liberating and life affirming.

We can all ask ourselves, whose authority do I recognize? Whom do I trust sufficiently to allow to have authority over me? Our baptismal calling is to allow Jesus to have authority in our lives, to allow him to be Lord of our lives. There is a drive in our culture towards ‘taking control’ or as we are used to hearing in a certain context, ‘taking back control.’

You know we can be tempted to think

- that we are ‘our own authority,’
- that we are ‘lord of our own lives’ and
- that ‘I alone can be in control of my life.’

Today’s gospel reading invites us to recognize that Jesus, ‘God’s love in human form,’ is the only one worthy of submitting our lives to.

We are invited by the gospel reading to share in the astonishment of the people of Capernaum at the ‘authoritative presence’ and ‘teaching’ of Jesus. *‘Here is a teaching that is new’*, they said.

Sometimes we need to recover that sense of excitement the people of Capernaum clearly had about Jesus. We need to rediscover the life-giving power of the Lord’s ‘authoritative presence’ and ‘words.’