

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time – The common theme of today’s readings is Divine authority, as exercised in this world by the prophets of the Old Testament in their messages, by the apostles (including St. Paul), in their writings and teaching in the New Testament, and by Jesus in his teaching and healing ministry.

Today’s first reading from the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy tells us that a true prophet like Moses speaks with authority because it is God Who speaks through him. After the Babylonian exile, the Jewish priests began to interpret the words of Moses given in the first reading, namely, *"a prophet like me,"* as referring to one individual, the expected Messiah. This passage is chosen for today’s first reading because it refers to Jesus, the "preacher with authority," mentioned in today’s Gospel.

The response for today’s Responsorial Psalm, (Ps 95), speaks of not hardening our hearts when we hear God’s authoritative voice through the Scripture and the Church’s teaching authority. In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul exercises his God-given authority as the *Apostle to the Gentiles* to teach people in Corinth that marriage is a holy state ordained by God and that it is a life-long partnership according to the teaching of the Lord. But he opts for, and recommends, celibacy, so that one may serve the Lord without the distractions of married life.

In today’s Gospel selection, Mark describes one sample Sabbath day of Jesus’ public life. Jesus joins in public worship in the synagogue as a practicing Jew, heals the sick, drives out evil spirits and prays privately. People immediately noticed that Jesus teaches with authority and heals with Divine power. Jesus explains the Scriptures with complete confidence, and when questioned by people, he answered with authority. Jesus is using His real (authentic) Divine authority to teach, empower, liberate, and heal others. In today’s Gospel, the evil spirit recognized and loudly declared Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus harsh, command, *"Be quiet! Come out of him!"* exorcises the demon who departs, obedient to Jesus’ Divine authority.

Jesus did not use His authority and Divine power to rule and control people, but to set them free. Similarly, let us approach Jesus with trusting Faith so that He may free us from the evil spirits that keep us from praying and that prevent us from loving others and sharing our blessings with them. Jesus also frees us from all the “evil spirits” of fear, jealousy, anger, envy, addictions, compulsions, selfishness, resentment, and hostility. May God free us from all those spirits which make us deaf, dumb, blind, lame, and paralyzed, physically and spiritually.

So many people with authority have made a lasting impression on our lives either for good or ill. Perhaps it was a grandparent, an uncle, or a parent, who loved us and cared for us. Perhaps it was a Sunday school teacher who encouraged us in our Faith and exerted a positive impact on our lives. Perhaps we remember the kindness as well

as the firm discipline that a schoolteacher gave us. Teachers are powerful because they change and mold lives. Let us all become good teachers like Jesus and use our authority to mold young lives in the right way.

Let us pray for the Conversion of the World
& for Peace

Possible Bulletin Cover Art

