



CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

February 1, 2015

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel reading Mark 1:21-28 *[To be read aloud]*

Then they came to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" Jesus rebuked him and said, "Quiet! Come out of him!" The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him. All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

Brief commentary:

We are now well into Ordinary Time, the liturgical season that invites us to enter into the Gospel story and become a part of it by allowing it to inform and shape our lives as Christians today. It calls us to follow Jesus Christ throughout his ministry by actively living out his Gospel message in everyday concrete ways. Today's readings emphasize the prophetic aspect of Jesus' ministry. The Old Testament reading from Deuteronomy anticipates a "prophet like Moses from the among the people," whom God "will raise up to speak his words to them." The psalm similarly emphasizes the people's call to listen to the voice of God that comes to them through a variety of ways, most especially from prophetic witness. Paul's advice to the Corinthians to "adhere to the Lord without distraction" is a call to a wholehearted commitment to the cause of the Gospel, which is to be lived in area of our lives. In the gospel we meet "the One who is not only a prophet, who speaks 'in the name of' the Lord, but is God himself who comes to speak to us 'in the person' of his Son, his Word" (CCC). At Capernaum, by the Lake of Galilee, Jesus as a devout Jew enters the synagogue on the Sabbath day. His mission is characterized by an authoritative teaching that amazes the people. Rather than commentaries on the Scriptures, his 'new' teaching is one in which he speaks on his own authority as he boldly reinterprets the Scriptures afresh and surpasses customary biblical reflection. In conjunction with his stunning words, Jesus' authoritative deeds affirm his message. Central to Jesus' mission is the liberation of the oppressed and of healing. Together with his teaching, Jesus of Nazareth confronts the oppressive powers: these recognize him as "the Holy One of God" who puts an end to their grip on the people. Jesus rebukes, silences, and commands them: they are powerless before the only true power. As a result of his astonishing teaching and works of deliverance, Jesus' fame spreads throughout the region. As Christians, we are both believers and followers: this means that we have put ourselves in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ totally, and that we are willing to follow him in all things, for he is the Way. Therefore, like Jesus, the Church today teaches 'with authority' the Gospel to the world in a way that is meaningful, coherent and which addresses the issues and challenges, the hopes and dreams, of our world. Similarly, Christians today must expose, rebuke, and drive out the demons that plague our lives, societies and world: violence and war, prejudice and racism, materialism and narcissism, oppression and poverty, and so many forms of evil that daily and oftentimes subtly affect our thinking and attitudes, relationships and choices, values and way of life. Because he has given us his Spirit, we too can – if united to him – bring to the world the saving Gospel and help liberate our world from the demons that bound and threaten our very existence. Discipleship essentially involves both believing in Jesus Christ and the living of the Christian mission to the world.

Today's reading offers significant messages:

- The readings of Ordinary Time call us to weekly to learn from the ministry of Jesus, and put to practice his mission today.
- Jesus' ministry is characterized both by words and deeds. Similarly, the Church and her members today must be both prophetic and active.
- Jesus mission revealed to people the truth that sets us free, and his actions liberated the afflicted and oppressed from their bondage.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

- How can I come to better learn the teaching of Jesus Christ, so that I can share it with others?
- How do my actions toward others reflect the ministry of Jesus?
- As a member of the Church, how do I expose, rebuke and silence evil in my life and society, and how do I help bring about the liberation of the oppressed in our world?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 2850-54