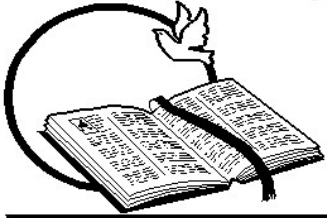


Living the Gospel in Everyday Life....



4th Sunday in Ordinary Time
January 29, 2012
Mark 1:21-28



What's Going On Here?

GOSPEL: 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.

MAKE WAVES! Today's Gospel takes us to a typical sabbath gathering during the time of Jesus. From the way the story unfolds, we can imagine that these sabbath gatherings were much like many religious gatherings of our times: faithful people maintaining or seeking a deeper relationship with God. Not too much new is happening. The congregation is fairly quiet, reserved. What they hear each week is pretty similar to what they've heard before. They know that the scribes are well educated in the law and tradition, and they pay attention, hoping to be inspired, looking for answers for their own lives, relying on the authority of their forebears yet, deep down, wanting something more. On this particular day, Jesus, as an adult male in the community, takes his turn at teaching, and all heaven breaks loose. The people are jolted from their passivity to amazement - not so much because of *what* Jesus says as because of *how* he says it, **with authority**. And then, he not only *speaks* but *acts* with authority in expelling the unclean spirits. Why are the people so amazed? Don't the scribes speak with authority? Do the people, and even the scribes themselves, suspect that the source of their authority is insufficient? Do they not have the conviction of heart that it takes to convince others? Whatever the cause of this sense of inauthenticity, Jesus offers something new and the people respond. Jesus is the real thing; he knows the source of his authority. He knows his own heart and he is true to it. His authenticity makes it possible for him to speak with real authority that is immediately recognizable by the people. He doesn't upset the status quo just for the sake of doing it. Everything is motivated by love: he believes it, he lives it, he speaks it, he acts it. He embodies it. And he's committed to following it through, even though the amazement that causes "his fame to spread everywhere throughout the region of Galilee" will eventually cause his death. It's not just an amazing story. It's an amazing call to us. Do we follow him with a conviction of the heart? Do we speak and act in love because we have it on the highest authority that this is what authentic human being is all about? This is the truth. We can't just sit around waiting to be inspired by a dynamic leader. We already have one and we're called to make waves like he did.

Questions For Reflection

- * *Is anything upsetting my status quo at this time? If so, what is it and how am I working with the upset?*
- * *Do I ever question authority? Why or why not? Is it a good or bad thing to question?*
- * *When I speak about my faith, how can I tell if I am speaking from a heart conviction?*
What is the source of my authority?
Am I being authentic?
Do I know what I'm talking about? If I'm not sure, what do I do about it?
- * *Am I an active participant or passively compliant when it comes to my religious practice? How does this affect my response to the call to discipleship?*