

Homily For Tuesday of the 1st Week of in Ordinary Time - Year 1

St Peter's 8:30/7:00 Masses - January 10, 2023

Hebrews 2: 5-12 "Jesus bears all glory and honour and is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters."

Psalms 97: 1-8 "What is man that you care for him, yet have made him a little lower than God."

Mark 1: 21-28 "A new teaching, with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey."

As One With Authority

Introduction

It seems like today we should make special mention of the liturgical colour. It has been awhile since it was green. Green is a pointed reminder that Christmas is over already. Green is the ordinary colour of nature, of course not at this time of year. A few years ago, at the church near the football stadium, mass took place as people were walking right by there to watch the Calgary Stampeders play the Saskatchewan Roughriders. People from Saskatchewan have green blood for their football team. The pastor concluded mass with this comment. He said: People wonder if God and his Church have a preference for which team wins. Well on this day, the church chooses ..." And he looked down at his green vestments.

I remember an expression from my childhood: "God's green earth." Green vestments is a symbol of the manner in which the mystery and the glory of God are made known, made visible, revealed in the ordinary days of our lives.

Mark

Mark is the perfect Gospel to lead us into ordinary time because he wastes no time establishing the identity of Jesus. In the ancient world, kings were anointed for their role. Jesus was baptized by John, a kind of anointing with water. Immediately, the Holy Spirit anoints Jesus and the Father speaks: You are my beloved Son." The fullness of the Holy Trinity is present from the first moment of Jesus ministry. Water and Spirit come together in him. The physical and the spiritual. Earth and heaven. Jesus goes into the wilderness to commune with the fullness of God. But he also encounters the devil.

What we will see once again as we journey towards Lent is that Jesus always knows the difference between the voice of God and the voices of the world, which are frequently influenced by demons. We, on the other hand, I'm sorry to say, are frequently fooled. Only in communion with our Lord can we access his wisdom to distinguish good and evil, darkness and light.

In this first teaching moment in Mark, the people can tell there is something powerfully unique in the way he speaks. They don't quite know what it is, but they recognize it as truly authoritative. We know that this is because it is the authority of the one who created everything and has absolute dominion and authority. It comes through in his words. We have those words and are called to hear them this way. The problem with the teaching of the scribes is possibly that they tend to speak with the authority they get from their position in society. And, even though they talk of divine things, they are speaking from a human place.

Then we see that Jesus backs up his teaching authority by his power over a demon. What should we notice here? I suggest we see clearly that the demon knows of Jesus' authority. It has no doubts. It screams: "You are the Holy One of God." Why does the demon know who Jesus is, but we live in a world where the culture increasingly rejects this truth, this reality? Even worse, some know who he is but will not submit. That is Satan's line: "I will not serve." In a world that is opposed to the authority of God, we see the demon. Mark is making that clear.

Hebrews

Now we look at the letter to the Hebrews for a deeper dive into the relationship between who Jesus is and who we are. Jesus is the Son of God, yet takes on a human body and suffers and dies. He is, for awhile, a little lower than the angels for awhile. At the crucifixion, the disciples are shocked that the Messiah died. The bigger shock is that God died. The one who takes on human flesh, which we just finished celebrating, also takes on the worst that human flesh can experience. If this is so, how can he also be God? Well, he does it so he can fully identify with our human experience, most especially our sinfulness. Only God can heal us. Only God can cast out your demons and mine. He has that authority, but he does it in the most human way, but stooping down to where we are, in our brokenness.

Hebrews quotes Psalm 8, which we also have today. I love how it's put: "Someone has said somewhere. That's so Catholic. We know our Scriptures better than we think, but that's often how we sound: Jesus healed a paralyzed guy. I think it's somewhere in the Gospel of James or Peter ... Of course, there are no gospels of James or Peter.

But Hebrews cites the psalm where God is all glory and honour, yet this glory and honour has somehow been given to men and women, making them only a little less than God. This is our identity in God. We have been given God's own glory and honour. Remember that, at creation, we were made in his image and likeness.

Call To Conversion

The very serious problem comes in the fact that we can lose this status by our own negligence. This we see everywhere, do we not? Let me give an example I think is quite relevant today. We hear about the need to save our planet from damage. We recognize our actions and attitudes are a problem. Often we recognize the problem. However, without the wisdom of God, our solutions are misguided, even evil. Without God, the world thinks that children are the problem. Too many of them. Prevent children. Kill the children before they are born. This is the demon. This is what happens when human wisdom says: Let's save our planet. But we are not the Saviour. Jesus is. There is a God, and we are not him. We need to respect our planet, not to save ourselves but because God gave it to us to care for.

This is the way one Catholic teacher put it: "We don't live in the world God made. We live in the world we have made of the world God made." God gave us a dignity before which we can only express our amazement, but also our deep gratitude and love for the one who gives his own glory to us.

Recognize the glory of God. Recognize that this glory abounds on and resides in Jesus. Recognize that a measure of this glory has been given to us. Recognize and be astounded by the authority of Jesus. What an inheritance. What grace. What glory.

Key Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *Upon a lofty throne, I saw a man seated, whom a host of angels adore, singing in unison: Behold him, the name whose empire is eternal.*

Collect: *O Lord, we pray that we may see what must be done and gain strength to do what we have seen.*

Hebrews: *God did not subject the coming world to angels. But someone has testified somewhere, What is man that you are mindful of him, or mortals that you care for them? Yet you have crowned him with glory and honour, subjecting all things under his feet. We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. It was fitting that God should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation.*

Psalm: *You gave your Son authority over all your creation. O Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. When I look at your heavens, what is man that you are mindful of him, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands.*

Mark: *Jesus and the disciples went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. A man with an unclean spirit 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." But Jesus rebuked him, saying: Be silent, and come out of him! And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed and they kept on asking one another: What is this? A new teaching - with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.*