

JANUARY 31, 2021
Sunday of the 4th Week in OT
Mark 1: 21-28

“LIFE-GIVING WORDS.”

“A group of frogs were travelling through the woods, and two of them fell into a deep pit. All the other frogs gathered around the pit. When they saw how deep the pit was, they told the two frogs that they were as good as dead. The two frogs ignored the comments and tried to jump up out of the pit with all of their might. The other frogs kept telling them to stop, that they were as good as dead. Finally, one of the frogs took heed to what the other frogs were saying and gave up. He gave up and died. The other frog continued to jump as hard as he could. Once again, the crowd of frogs yelled at him to stop the pain and just die. He jumped even harder and finally made it out. When he got out, the other frogs said, "Did you not hear us?" The frog explained to them that he was deaf. He thought they were encouraging him the entire time. This story teaches two lessons: Firstly, there is power of life and death in the tongue. An encouraging word to someone who is down can lift them up and help them make it through the day. Secondly, a destructive word to someone who is down can be what it takes to kill them. We need to be careful of what we say. Let us speak life-giving words to those who cross our path.”¹

Teachers are very important to us. They taught a lot of things during our primary or secondary or college schools about math, science, things around us and even lessons in life. Some we might prefer to forget and others we remembered with great joy, love, and affection. They had so much influence on us, inspired us, shared their expertise, and encouraged us to do the best we can not only in school but in life. We felt that time, they were in authority to make us better, educated, and successful in the future.

We heard in today’s gospel Jesus was explicitly in authority not only in words but also in deeds. In the first part of the gospel, the people were astounded for He taught them in words

¹ Anonymous, www.stories4homilies.co

with authority and not as scribes. “When Jesus taught, He spoke with authority. He spoke the word of God as no one had spoken it before. When the Rabbis taught, they supported their statements with quotes from other authorities. The prophets spoke with delegated authority - “Thus says the Lord.” When Jesus spoke, He needed no authorities to back His statements. He was authority incarnate - the Word of God made flesh. When He spoke, God spoke. When He commanded even the demons obeyed.”² In the second part, Jesus also showed His authority through His actions. He commanded and freed the man with unclean spirit through His powerful words “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.”³

The authority of Jesus rooted in God and He spoke with authority because He is God. The words He spoke was a word of love, encouragement, and hope, that’s why people who heard Him were attracted, convinced, persuaded, and encouraged to follow Him. They were liberated by His life-giving words and He exercised authority with compassion, mercy, and empathy. “Jesus defines authority as the exercise of God’s life-giving and liberating power, the power that raises the lowly and fills the hungry with good things, that includes within the community those who have been living on the edge, the power that forgives those who have done nothing to deserve forgiveness. This is the power of the good Samaritan who took care of his fellow traveller even though he was a Jew; it is the power of the Father who welcomed his returning son, the prodigal, who had messed up; it is the power of the widow who in giving two copper coins to the temple treasury gave everything she had. Within the gospel’s vision of life, these are the exercises of power that confer authority.”⁴

My brothers and sisters, do we follow and recognize people with authority? Do we trust them and give them respect? Do we follow our parents, teachers, and those in charge of us?

² www.dailyscripture.net

³ Mark 1: 25-27 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

⁴ www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie

Do we recognize Jesus as our ultimate authority? “Like the people of Capernaum, we recognise His authority, the authority of His teaching and His deeds, the authority of His life, death and resurrection. That is why we confess Jesus not just as our teacher but as our Lord. We are happy to submit to His authority, to His lordship, because we recognise that in doing so, we will have life to the full, and, like the man in the gospel, be freed of those spirits that prevent us from becoming the person God intends us to be.”⁵ So, let us listen, follow and give our trust to Jesus, the One who will give us life and joy, the One who will free us from harm and burdens, and the One who will lead us to the Kingdom of God as we remain faithful to Him.

Let this be our prayer: “Lord Jesus, I recognize that Your Word is my strength, and my life and like St. Peter I will also say: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”⁶ Help me to never disbelieve and doubt Your compassion, forgiveness, love and mercy. I believe that Your word will keep me safe, sets me free, and brings health, healing and restoration to my body and soul. Amen.”

⁵ ibid

⁶ John 60: 68-69 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA