

28 January 2018 (Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 94(95):1-2,6-9; 1 Corinthians 7:32-35; Mark 1: 21-28.

**He taught them with authority.**

The gospel according to Mark continues to introduce the person of Jesus to us. Last week we saw Jesus calling his first disciples to follow him, today we see Jesus in the synagogue at Caparnaum teaching and healing. While last week Jesus' word was enough for the disciples to leave everything and follow Jesus, today he frees a man of an evil spirit and his listeners are amazed, because he talks with authority.

The Church gives us a passage from the book of Deuteronomy as a first reading. In this reading we see Moses addressing the people of Israel and telling them that God will raise up from among them a prophet to speak in his name; the true role of the prophet is not to foretell the future but to speak God's word to his people. Over the time of the Old Testament we see God calling a number of prophets and other men and women to speak in his name; the people of Israel are invited to listen to God's word.

As we reflect on today's gospel passage we realise that Jesus is the prophet who perfectly fulfils the prophecy of Moses. Jesus does not only speak God's word but is himself the word of God. While all other prophets and preachers before and after Jesus depend on the word of God for their authority, Jesus speaks of his own authority because in him God speaks out directly and completely.

Like the disciples and the people at the time of Jesus we are invited to listen to Jesus and recognise in him the fulness of God's word. Today, in our life, Jesus still speaks to us. At times we may become too familiar to God's word and become immune to its effects. The people in today's gospel were still discovering who Jesus really was and were impressed at the way he spoke – with authority. This authority that Jesus has is also witnessed in the immediate response of the disciples who follow Jesus and in the evil spirits who are silenced and obey his command.

As we continue our journey of discipleship, at the beginning of a new year, we too are invited to approach the word of God with a new attitude and be open and ready to listen to it and allow it to speak to us with its own authority. Can the word of God change me? Am I open to let myself be changed by God's word? Moses commanded the people of Israel to listen to the prophets sent to them by God. Earlier in the gospel according to Mark, at the scene of Jesus' Baptism, the voice of the Father from heaven commands us to listen to and obey Jesus' message.

The true disciple is the one who is always ready to follow Jesus. The true disciple always reflects and builds his life on the word of God. Let us, as true disciples, listen to Jesus and his word.

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