

PEDRO ARRUIPE INSTITUTE, RAIA - GOA

REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY LITURGY

31st January 2021 – Fourth Sunday In Ordinary Time

DT 18: 15-20 | 1 COR 7: 32-35 | MK 1: 21-28

Spiritual Track: Fr. Joseph Fernandes SJ

Authority of Jesus

In today's Gospel, Mark presents Jesus as one who spoke and acted with authority. However, Jesus' authority was not derived from human authority like the scribes who call on the Scriptures and scholars. Jesus possesses authority that was his always by virtue of who he was. Besides teaching with authority Jesus also acted with authority providing that He as Son of God was more powerful than any evil spirit.

Pope Francis tells us that if we use our authority unworthily to press power, wealth and control over others than our authority is not true. Nor does it reflect our belonging to Jesus. Jesus did not use his power and authority for his own good or his own selfish motive. He used his authority always to do good and to glorify God. Therefore Jesus taught with authority not only because He was God but also because his words are always accompanied by his deeds and his deeds are invariably consonance with his words. For example, when he said "No greater love than for a man to give his life to his friends." He showed this by willingly offering his life on the cross for us that is why he could demand from us "a new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you." Today, we seem to be far away from the example of Jesus. Our words become meaningless because too often they are not accompanied by deeds. Sometimes even we act contrary to what we say and teach. Christian witnessing is what we solely lack today. Pope Paul IV wrote in 1975, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." The disciples acknowledged Jesus' power over evil and unclean spirits and they became his witnesses throughout all of Galilee.

St. Alfred Delf, was a Jesuit priest who was hanged by the Nazis for the opposition to Hitler. In his final message to friends, he wrote "If through one man's life there is a little more love and kindness, a little more light and truth in the world, then he will not have lived in vain." Today let us pray, more than ever, for our countrymen and politicians who have become more selfish and greedy that they are using their power and authority making money and to have control over others. May they learn from Jesus and use their authority and power for the good of the people.

Scriptural Track: Fr. Ronnie D'Souza SJ

Theme: The Lord Jesus must have impressed a lot of people as a real “Somebody”, and we have this stated in His first experience in the synagogue in Capernaum, when He not just taught but taught with authority and was obeyed by the evil spirit who were commanded by Him to leave the man who was possessed by them. We are beginning this new liturgical year ordinary time and reflecting on God’s Word made flesh expressing God’s plans and designs for us. Carefully paying attention to the readings, chosen by the Church for this Sunday let us realize that we are called to be like Jesus, witnesses of His message by expressing His authority in our whole behaviour; words and actions.

The first Reading is Deut. 18/15-20. In this passage Moses speaking to the Israelites before he dies tells them that God will send another prophet like himself, Moses, to guide them. This prophet will lead His people. God did lead the people to the Promised Land and then led them by leaders and later on by kings. But while all these leaders had a role to play none of them could ever come close to the role of Moses. It is only in Jesus who came to lead the whole world; not just the people of Israel, to an intimate relationship with God who wants to be a Father to everyone who so desires, that the prophecy was fulfilled in a marvellous way. But this implies a positive response on the part of everyone who hears it. Today’s response gives us this correct response: “Oh that today you would listen to His voice harden not your hearts.”

The second Reading is 1. Cor. 7/32-35: In this passage Paul is exhorting us to avoid things that may lead us away from God. In his case he believed the second coming of Jesus was imminent and so he wanted all to be so radically prepared. Paul was mistaken about the timing of the Lord’s second coming, but his message of being prepared for the Lord at all times is valid even today.

Today’s Gospel is Mark 1/21-28: in this passage we see how God’s Word in the person of Jesus breaks through in human history announcing the coming of God’s Kingdom of justice, love and peace. There evil must cease!

We are called today to Listen often and with faith to the Lord Jesus and His teaching with authority, as we have it in the Scripture. “Spellbound” by His words, we will be able to keep balance in a society where so much of other “wisdom” is for sale.