

**Little house of prayer - Week of Jan 29 – Feb 04, 2012**

**IV Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**“Today and always, you will hear His voice; harden not your hearts!”**

**1. The Word of God**

**Reading 1 – Deuteronomy 18:15-20**

Moses spoke to all the people, saying: "A prophet like me will the LORD, your God, raise up for you from among your own kin; to him you shall listen. This is exactly what you requested of the LORD, your God, at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let us not again hear the voice of the LORD, our God, nor see this great fire any more, lest we die.' And the LORD said to me, 'This was well said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kin, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him. Whoever will not listen to my words which he speaks in my name, I myself will make him answer for it. But if a prophet presumes to speak in my name an oracle that I have not commanded him to speak, or speaks in the name of other gods, he shall die.'"

**The Word of the Lord / Thanks be to God**

**Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9**

**R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD; let us acclaim the rock of our salvation.  
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

Come, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the LORD who made us.  
For he is our God, and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

Oh, that today you would hear his voice: "Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,  
as in the day of Massah in the desert, Where your fathers tempted me;  
they tested me though they had seen my works."

**Reading 2 – 1 Corinthians 7:32-35**

Brothers and sisters: I should like you to be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction.

**The Word of the Lord / Thanks be to God**

**Proclamation of the Holy Gospel according to Mark (Mar 1:21-28) +++ Glory to you, Lord**

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.

**The Gospel of the Lord / Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ**

## **2. References for a better understanding of the Gospel**

Today's passage is the one immediately following last week's Gospel, where we learned that the Lord called Peter, Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee (James and John). Jesus has recruited His first apostles. He is launching His Mission, and decides to be very upfront about it: He went to the Synagogue, where the People of God had gathered, and preached there.

Today, we learn that people were amazed, mesmerized by the way He taught, because He spoke with authority, unlike the masters of the Law. This affirmation and comparison should give us plenty to think about...

First, we should feel sorry for the "masters of the Law" because it appears that they did not teach very well, and second, we should ask ourselves why they failed, while Jesus amazed everyone who heard Him...

The masters of the Law had had, in general, a good formation, with years of preparation in the study of the Mosaic Law and the Scriptures. Jesus, on the other hand, was a carpenter. The doctors of the Law, as the Scribes, spent hours every day, reading, interpreting and discussing not only the Word of God, but the interpretation itself, the historical context on which the books of the Torah had been written, etc.

Obviously, they did not lack knowledge and ability, but they lacked testimony. Most likely, they spoke a lot about God, but they spoke very little with Him. This would make a big difference because, as we know from the Gospel, Jesus would constantly "retreat alone" to pray.

Another important aspect is that, unlike Jesus (who had no other interest than explain what was the Kingdom of Heaven, and show who God the Father really was), the Scribes and Doctors of the Law, like many members of the sect of the Pharisees, had a divided heart, and this removed from them the purity of intention that was necessary to focus on the matters of God.

What they wanted was to excel, to be valued, respected, loved, and from there, obtain economical and political advantages, and Lord knows what else...

Jesus, on the other hand, spoke "with authority" because He truly had it, and He not only had it because He was the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God Himself, but because even as a man, He was a decent person, logical, truthful, and full of the Holy Spirit. In the same chapter of the Gospel of St. Mark, verses 9 thru 13, we read that the Holy Spirit descended upon Him at His Baptism, and it was that same Spirit that drove Him out into the desert to be strengthened through prayer and fasting before He started His sacred mission.

When we try to fill ourselves with God, to live as we preach, and preach as we live, our words become credible, and an assurance to those who listen. That was not the case with the Scribes, who preached the Sacred Scriptures but manipulated them for their personal gain at the expense of the people.

Jesus' authority came from His purity of intention and His profound love for the Father and the people. So we, as responsible members of our apostolate, must be aware that, to the extent that we are pious and practice charity, our teachings will always be more fruitful.

These matters should leave us an important lesson, because beyond the fact that the Lord has called each one of us to speak in His Name, and disseminate the Truths of the Kingdom, the purity of intention will always be the key to success, even in the midst of the most mundane activities we engage in.

Jesus walked this world doing good, as the Scriptures tell us, and we can confirm this in today's Gospel, when we read that He Commanded an unclean spirit to leave the body of a possessed man. Like Him, we should dedicate as much time of our lives as possible, to serve others, within our means.

### **REFLECTION OF OUR FOUNDING MOTHER IN RELATION TO THE GOSPEL:**

The Lord begins to establish the Kingdom of God among the people in a very particular way, through His preaching. He possesses the knowledge, the authority and the power over this Kingdom, and so, the Word

marks again the beginning of what God wants. The Word of Jesus is accompanied by His power as Son of God.

The Messiah was long-awaited by the Jewish people, but not like that, not with those characteristics. They were expecting a warrior, but the message of Jesus was different; it did not fulfill their expectations, or the things that they expected from Him, just as it happens nowadays with many of us, who only want to see "something useful" in God.

Again, God breaks the assumptions of men, and is precisely with this message, when Jesus is going to reveal the Face of God.

There were a lot of people in the temple that day. None of the present knew that one of them was possessed by an unclean spirit. However, Jesus, Who knew all of them, knew that one of those men needed to be healed. He rebuked the bad spirit and told him: "Quiet! Come out of him!" They were amazed, and could not understand, so they asked themselves: What is this?

None of us may "scan" the hearts of others, but we may scan our own (and it is important that we do it often) and know what is inside of it. Only Jesus knows the dark spirits that inhabit our hearts, whether these be: wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy, gluttony, etc. Many are the dark spirits that live within us.

Today, the Lord also tells all of them: "Quiet! Come out!" And with profound Love tells us: "Do not be afraid, my son, my daughter, I am here to heal you, to set you free. I have authority and power, and you will have the same power, once you begin to have a more profound relationship with Me and My Father."

This Gospel invites us then, to deepen our faith through prayer, and listening to Jesus Christ.

In today's world, we live constantly threatened by fear, in some places more than others. Crime and burglary force us to live behind locked doors; the world of drugs continues to enchain more victims, not only adults, but children and young people; teenagers are getting pregnant at an age when, rather than suffering, they should be enjoying the privileges that many old people long for; domestic violence, terrorism, racism... Despite the evolution of the world and science, the quality of life does not improve; on the contrary, it continues to deteriorate, by the growing fears of humanity...

Evil exists under many masks... these are the demons that frighten us; the very same evil is turning our people into a sad society. However, today's Gospel reminds us the authority of Jesus, to instruct us on how to defeat evil, and how to defend ourselves from all the things that cause us so much harm.

It is time for us to enter the School of Jesus, to sit at His feet, listen to His Words, and strengthen our faith, so we can expel demons in His Name; to increase our hope in the fact that, if we take many men to Jesus, He will build a more numerous army to defeat the forces of evil that are keeping us prisoners, inside and out; to fill us up with more love and more charity for the whole world... Jesus will set us free from our own miseries, and from the men that, by not knowing God, continue to live in darkness and do evil.

It is possible that in the process, as with the man of the Gospel, we will shake and give loud cries, meaning, that by putting ourselves in the hands of the Potter, He may have to cut, mold, polish, and put the clay back in the kiln; this may cause us pain, but would we rather be an ordinary cup, full of holes from where Graces can escape, or would we rather be the cup from which Jesus may offer the new wine to the Father?

It is time, Mexico, Bolivia, United States of America, Venezuela, Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, all of Europe...! It is time to go back to God, to open the doors of our hearts, not just a little, but wide open; it is time to give ourselves to the Plan of Salvation that He has for each nation and for each one of us!

Let us seriously run away from everything that hinders us from following the Lord. Let us run away from those who want to divide the Church of Jesus Christ, our families and apostolate.

**3. Questions to lead the reflection** (*Read each item slowly, and leave a moment of silence after each question to allow our brothers and sisters to reflect*):

- a) How do I show that I recognize Jesus' authority?
- b) The Lord does not like gossip: What do I do to not fall prey to this bad habit? What do I do to avoid hurting the Lord with this negative attitude?
- c) How do I fight the evil that always tries to hinder the plans that God has for our lives?
- d) Do I try to share with others, the wonderful doctrine of Jesus? How do I do it? Do I convey it through my actions? When I speak about the things of God, do I do so with the authority of someone who at least tries to put them into practice?

**4. Comments from the brothers and sisters:** *After a few moments of silence, the participants of the Little House of Prayer will be given time to speak, to express their opinions, reflections and comments. As always, we will seek everyone's participation.*

**5. Concordances between the Holy Gospel and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Canons 65, 104, 150, 152)**

**65** "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son." Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect, and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. St. John of the Cross, among others, commented strikingly on *Hebrews* 1:1-2:

In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word – and he has no more to say ... because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behavior but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty.

**104** In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, "but as what it really is, the word of God." "In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them.

**150** Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a *free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed*. As personal adherence to God and assent to his truth, Christian faith differs from our faith in any human person. It is right and just to entrust oneself wholly to God and to believe absolutely what he says. It would be futile and false to place such faith in a creature (Cfr. *Jeremiah* 17:5-6; *Psalms* 40:5; 146:3-4).

**152** One cannot believe in Jesus Christ without sharing in his Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to men who Jesus is. For "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit," who "searches everything, even the depths of God. . . . No one comprehends the thoughts of God, except the Spirit of God." Only God knows God completely: we believe in the Holy Spirit because he is God. *The Church never ceases to proclaim her faith in one only God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

**6. Reflection with the Great Crusade**

**CL 113 - Jesus (The Church...)** I have entrusted My Blood to her; I subject Myself to her as a very beloved wife; she possesses all My wealth because I have given it to her. Love her intensely because I made her for you too and I gave her authority and wisdom so that she can always take care of you in all ways, on all occasions. Whoever does not love her is not worthy of Me and he who loves her is like Me, for I love her infinitely.

**CM 21 – Jesus** I have delegated to you all power to expel the evil spirits that oppress the hearts and the lives of people. This is what you need to do: appropriate for yourselves the name that heals, the name that saves, the name that frees, and the name before which every knee in heaven and earth bends. Yes! Every time you

feel the enemy acting in your lives, in your homes, in your families, speak with authority, as I did: Yes! Every time you feel the enemy acting in your lives, in your homes, in your families, speak with authority, as I did: *“In the name of Jesus, be gone, Satan. In the name of Jesus, be gone, depression. In the name of Jesus, be gone, physical illness and spiritual illness. In the name of Jesus, depart from us everything that belongs to Satan, for we belong to Jesus, we are children of God, for only to Him do we belong and are we washed and purified at this moment with the Blood of Jesus Christ, for the blood of Jesus has power.”*

7. **Final Comments or Questions:** *Once again, the participants will be given time to speak briefly about the excerpts from the Catechism, the Great Crusade or any other topic of interest to the House of Prayer, the Apostolate or the Church in general.*
8. **Virtue of the Month:** **This month, we will practice the virtue of Spiritual Poverty (Catechism of the Catholic Church – Canons 520, 2544, 2545, 2546)**

**This week, we will meditate upon Canon 520, which textually says:**

**520** In all of his life Jesus presents himself as *our model*. He is "the perfect man," who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way. (Cfr. Matthew 5:11-12)

**And the Great Crusade tells us: CS 94 – Jesus**

I desire that you have a high concept of this virtue that makes you in My likeness. That is why I suggest to you that you adopt the following method: when you are unable to divest yourselves of what you have because of previously assumed duties, give away something each day that you value highly. That is your own selves, your will; so that in practice, you will be doing at least once a day, the will of others... This is a gift which you make, and which will impoverish the “me” in each one. But it is necessary to have determination and never stop.

## **9. Weekly purposes**

**In relation to the Gospel:** When facing temptations, I will repeat: “Jesus, I trust in You,” because I know the Lord has authority over the devil.

**In relation to this month’s virtue:** I will try to attend my House of Prayer with a true spirit of humility, and with the purpose of strengthening my faith through whatever my brothers and sisters have to tell me and teach me.