

## Fr James' homily for The Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 2021

First Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20  
Second Reading: First Letter to the Corinthians: 7:32 - 35  
Gospel: Mark 1:21-28



*"Name Him, brothers, name Him..."* Today is the last Sunday before the end of the greater Christmas season on 2 Feb, and it occurs to me to remind ourselves about what we celebrate in Christmas: that in Jesus God is born to us and we call him by name. It is vital that we can put a name to him, and what I mean by that is not just the name we call him - Jesus - but to put an identity to him, to sum up who his is, if you like.

This is why Holy Church in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit has given us the reading from Deuteronomy today. This off-puttingly named book just means the "second book of law" and is a series of talks by Moses in which he sums up his unique understanding of the Law of God first given at Sinai. Pope Emeritus Benedict, no less, uses this passage as the key with which to unlock the identity of Jesus. For Moses, the ultimate and greatest authority for the People of Israel, tells them in no uncertain terms that there will be someone greater and more than him.

Against this prophecy is set the Gospel, carrying on from last week's excerpt, as Jesus begins his ministry, appropriately preaching in the synagogue. Jesus is shown doing what you do in the synagogue, that is you read and comment on the scriptures, with reference back to Moses as the first and greatest authority. EXCEPT that what Jesus does is different.

Jesus astonishes them by teaching with his own authority. This they say is something new, not meaning that he is teaching something novel or different to the Law, but the same Law in a fresh and exciting way. Jesus invites everybody to ask themselves the question: who could do this other than the one Moses said was greater than Moses?? And who is greater than Moses? Answer: the one who spoke to Moses and gave him the Law - the Lord God almighty. So we finish greater Christmas once more underlining *"He is God you come to meet"*. (Sorry, I seem to be filling this homily with lines from all the carols and hymns we can't sing this year).

By way of demonstration, Jesus underlines his identity with an act of healing. (Notice by the way that the first demon Jesus meets in his ministry is right there in the front row of the church!!!) The point here is that Jesus comes to bring unity and healing, to heal what has been divided. The demon refers to itself, as they often do, in the plural "us" because they are divided in themselves. Christ has come to bring healing to a world so divided against itself, as each sinful soul is divided too.

*"Name him, brothers, name him..."* is a line from a famous hymn. Note too that it is this demon that gives a name to Jesus and calls out his identity. Why does Jesus then tell him to be quiet? This is a question about all of Mark's Gospel, as Jesus repeatedly tells people not to shout about his identity. Surely, friends, this is because there must be no pressure or coercion on us.

At the end of the day naming him is what our faith is about. Each of us must choose for ourselves to name him, to point to him and identify him. That only to his name shall we bend the knee. That we will make him ruler and authority over every aspect of ourselves and our lives. That is the task for 2021. For, as Christmas tells us: *"Of his dominion there shall be no end"*. It is best to choose to be in his dominion!

*(As you take down the figures of your crib at home, maybe, on Tuesday, pray using the name of Jesus as you do so, naming him the Lord of all of your life.)*

Amen.

*Fr James and Fr Tom wish you a blessed Sunday. Keep safe and well, and never hesitate to pick up the telephone and be in touch. See you in church I hope! Keep in close contact with the website for news of how practical plans are developing.*