

Readings Deuteronomy 18: 15-20; Corinthians 7: 32-35; Mark 1: 21-28;



Fr Michael says:

Teaching with Authority

“By their deeds, you shall know them” Jesus said. He has come as the fulfilment of God’s Promises in the Hebrew Bible – the second Moses as Matthew had put it. Deuteronomy gives us Moses’ prophecy of the Prophet who will speak God’s Word to the people: who will speak in God’s name and therefore whose voice carries authority and is confirmed through miracles. Today we see how Jesus is seen to be this Prophet by the people. Paul invites us to give our undivided attention to Him.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was a great literary figure in XIX Century USA, and wrote: “Only so much do I know as I have lived. Instantly, we know whose words are loaded with life. I learn immediately from any speaker how much he has lived. One person speaks *from within*, or from experience, as a possessor of fact; another speaks *from without*, as a spectator or as acquainted with the facts on the evidence of a third party. It is no use to preach to me from without – I can do that myself!” Jesus very profoundly was a man who spoke from within, “in a degree that transcended all others, but this is the way it should always be. All people stand continually in the expectation of the appearance of such a teacher.”

Second hand is not worth that much! Authority needs lived experience, which Jesus has to the full! Jesus comes from ordinary stock, not from the learned classes! There is a freshness and transparency – He provided people with a way of living that came expressing the reality of the great school of life itself. Jesus has no official position and so can be Himself, not someone who has to toe the party line as it were. The Teachers they were used to start by affirming the name of the person on whose behalf they were preaching, as a source of authenticity. There would be many quotations from past authors – there would be no independent judgement. Jesus was Himself!

Authority is not the same thing as influence; power and control are different. We know that many people with the greatest influence had no authority behind them, they do not need authority to control others. Influence comes from the person who is firmly at home with himself and what he believes and how he lives – it is WHO they are that counts. In the fullest sense of the word, it stems from the authority of God Himself, otherwise they are merely mouthpieces. Such was the influence and strength of Jesus!

We listen to people who have done something, their words carry great weight, have real authority. Many words often mean little action. The root of much that is wrong in our world stems from this simple fact: the discrepancy between word and deed. It affects all areas of our lives, in Society and very often within the Church too!

“Lord, grant that what we have said with our lips, we may believe in our hearts and practise with our lives.” Amen!

Reflection for 4th (Education) Sunday of the year B, 2015



Fr Tom says:

Good authors and artists always have a message to convey. They offer their opinions, understanding and possible solutions to problems that people face as well as entertain and/or provide knowledge and information. They are also aware that those who read their works or look at their pictures may see things and raise questions and issues of which the author had not even thought. Overall, they generally want to broaden our horizons, challenge and deepen our understanding, and present us with a new or different vision. They do not seek to dictate what we think or demand that we necessarily agree with their views.

Much can be said about the readings this week which, as always, present us with three visions from their authors. However, let us focus on the word that is repeated in the Gospel: *'Authority'*. Mark stresses that Jesus spoke with *authority*. Obviously, there is always a power associated with authority but it is the way this power is used that distinguishes it in Jesus case. The authority that Jesus conveys is one that banishes evil and gives it no room in our lives. Mark also gives the impression that Jesus spoke not only to the minds but also to the hearts of his listeners. Jesus spoke in such a way that everything he said helped them grow in understanding and stretched their horizons so that their understanding of God and God's relationship with them was both strengthened and deepened. In this sense, the authority of Jesus was such that it cast out the evils of fear and harmful misunderstandings from his listeners. In other words, he helped them come to see more clearly and more healthily how they were created in the image and likeness of God. What is also good about this authority is that it also raises more questions about him: "What did this all mean?"

"What does this all mean?" This is one of our permanent questions and recognises that the important questions in our lives are always ongoing, never fully answered and invite us to go further. The answers we receive are always partial, sometimes individual and open to be extended and even changed with time and experience.

The true believer, the person of Faith in Jesus Christ will always be faced with questions which challenge and frustrate. If we trust God as God trusts us, all our questions will lead us to a deeper understanding of the knowledge and love of God and joy of the Good News that Jesus not only preached with authority but lived it and continues to live it with us!

As people of faith, our alleluia verse reminds us: *The people that lived in darkness have seen a great light; on those who dwell in the land and shadow of death a light has dawned. (Mt4:16)*

The challenge for us concerning authority, therefore, is that we use the power of our authority only to help people grow in understanding and knowledge of God's love for them and the world, and of the value that God places on their relationship. This use of authority builds confidence, provides greater inner freedom, motivates and encourages but will also challenge fixed views. This authority shows confidence in people, expresses absolute trust in them and shows deep respect for their value and dignity. Whether in our families or in our places of work, but especially teachers, using our authority in this way, (like Mark writes at the beginning of his Gospel), we, too, will become the authors of GOOD NEWS.