

## Homily 4th Sunday Year B 2024

Today marks the beginning of the Chinese New Year and the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the lunar year. Let us hope that the year ahead fosters peace.

In a world torn by war in Gaza, in the Ukraine and elsewhere, one can believe the world is inhabited by demons like the man in the Gospel. Mark writes about Jesus as the one whose presence brought peace to where there was disturbance and calm to where there was turbulence. Just as he calmed the storm at sea last week, he calms the storm that had taken possession of a person's life. The Lord can and will have the same calming effect on us if we open to him the brokenness and turmoil of our lives.

There is a chant that responds well to the gospel today, *'Calm me, Lord, as you calmed the storm; still me, Lord, keep me from harm. Let all the tumult within me cease, enfold me, Lord, in your peace'*.

Let us open ourselves to the Lord's calming presence and invite him to strengthen our relationship with him. Being aware of his presence we will be better able to respond to others. We will become channels of the Lord's calming and healing presence to each other and to all those we encounter.

The people in the synagogue were astonished at Jesus healing the demoniac, *'Here is a teaching that is new, and with authority behind it'*. There was a freshness, a newness, to the word of Jesus. They also sensed and believed that there was authority in his word. Rather than just speak about the presence of God's kingdom, Jesus *showed* that God's loving rule was present by his actions in healing the demoniac. His was a word that accomplished what it said. In response they started asking what it all meant.

Perhaps we have lost something of the astonishment present in the people of Capernaum at the newness and authority of Jesus' teaching. Have we heard the teaching of Jesus so often that it no longer seems new to us?

We are offered an opportunity today to greet the words of Jesus in a new way because Jesus still retains his newness as the risen Lord, and his word still retain its freshness, power and authority. We are invited to keep hearing the Lord's word afresh and to experience its power anew. Saint Augustine spoke of God as a *'Beauty, ever ancient, ever new'*. The word, the teaching, of Jesus is itself ever ancient and, yet, ever new. His word can speak to us in new ways each day of our lives because it is a living word. The question the people asked in today's gospel reading, *'What does it all mean?'* is a question we can all ask about the teaching and life of Jesus. It is a question that invites us to explore afresh the newness of the Lord and what the Lord means to me now.

What Jesus means to me now will be different to what he meant to me in the past or will mean to me in the future. Listen to the psalmist who cries *'O that today you would listen to his voice'*. Let us do that each day. The Lord constantly speaks to us anew if we have ears to hear. Then, like the people in the synagogue of Capernaum, each day we too can be astonished by the Lord!!