

He Spoke with Authority

In today's Gospel reading the Sacred Writer, the Holy Spirit, speaks about the authority of the Lord. The reading is taken from the first chapter of the earliest of the Gospels, the *Gospel of Mark*. Jesus begins to teach in Capernaum. The people are held spellbound because he spoke with authority, not like the scribes. A man comes before Jesus who is in the hand of the power of evil. Jesus makes the devil come out of the man. The bystanders are amazed because Jesus has such authority.

What do we mean when we speak about the authority of the Lord? What do we mean when we talk about authority in general? What ways do we exercise authority? What ways do we exercise the authority of the Lord?

The word authority comes from the Latin word *auctoritas*. The basic meaning of this Latin word is *creator*. The word author also comes from this word. When we talk about the authority of the Lord, we recognize that as the Creator of the Universe he has the power to govern the universe. Just as an author can determine what takes place in the short story he or she writes, God can determine what takes place in the universe He has created.

When we talk about authority in general, we speak about the power a person has received to determine the actions of another person or a group of people. For the well being of our society, we entrust our law enforcement officers with the authority to protect us. For example we give the police the authority to stop our cars if we are driving at 54 mph on a street where the speed limit is posted as 40 mph. However, as the source of authority, we can change the laws. If we change the speed limit on the same road to 55 mph, the policeman no longer has the right to stop us from speeding if we are going 54 mph. In general, authority is intimately connected with its source. We, the most powerful nation in the world, made George H. Bush president from 1988 to 1992. Back then he was the most powerful person in the world. However, in 1992, we, as a country, chose Bill Clinton to be president instead of re-electing George H. Bush. George H. Bush was no longer the most powerful person in the world because we removed his authority from him.

All authority is by nature transitional, all authority except that authority which comes from the Lord and which has its goal to return to Him. Jesus held people spellbound because God gave Him the authority to teach the truth. This authority would never be removed from Jesus because Jesus was intimately united to his Father, the source of the authority.

We share in the authority of the Lord to the extent that we are united to the source of this authority. When we are confirmed we receive the power, the authority,

to defeat evil in the world and to lead others to Jesus, the source of all truth. This authority is given to us by God. God can remove this authority and will remove this authority if we refuse to stay intimately united to him. I hope our young people who are about to be confirmed, our parents who need to direct their children, and all of us, myself included, understand the gravity of all this. God has entrusted us with his authority only to the extent that we allow him into our lives. That is the reason why the Church is adamant that we attend Church regularly and receive the sacraments regularly. We need to have union with God so we can bring his authority, his power to the world.

The crowd was spellbound because Jesus spoke with authority, not like the scribes and pharisees. People are no different now than they were then. People want to hear the real word of God, and feel the presence of God in the words of the speaker. We can do this. We have the authority to do this. People want to witness the Word of God present in our lives, and then choose to make the Word of God present in their own lives. We can do this. We can make Jesus' presence real for others. We have the authority to do this. People want to learn how to live their lives in such a way that when they conclude their lives they can stand before the Lord saying that they have made his presence known in the world. We can do this. We have the authority, the power, to form others into Christian leaders. We have the authority, the power of Jesus Christ if only we stay united to him.

Today we pray that we may remain united to the Lord, the source of the power and the authority we have received.