

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 28, 2024



REFLECTION

Everyone listens to the authority of another. We have parents and teachers who we follow. Our parents and teacher have supervisors who they have to report to, and so on. We stop at a red light while driving. We consider what our priest says and follow his advice after the sacrament of reconciliation. We even obey gravity by not floating away. Even though there are different kinds of authorities in our lives, not every person loves answering to someone or something else. We often rebel against the authorities, whether that is by arguing with an adult or not fully stopping at a stop sign.

In today's Gospel, even the demons answer to an authority: Jesus. He teaches as an authority because he is one; he is the Son of God! No one has heard anything like it before. All of creation listens to and obeys Jesus. He is the ultimate authority.

When we trust in Jesus' authority, we trust that what he says is true. We also trust that he has the best intentions and wants to bring us to the fullness of life. What does trusting Jesus look like? It is a life filled with prayer, love, and mercy. It is a life of the sacraments and service to our neighbor. Trusting in Jesus means following him and living as he calls us.



ACTION

Trusting in Jesus and the authorities that God has placed over us can be a hard thing to do. This week, make a personal goal to show respect to the authorities in your life. Speak politely to your parents and teachers and coaches. Respond when people talk to you. Participate more fully in school and church. Spend time honoring the authorities in your life.



"The Goodness of God"

—TRIBL & Maverick City Music,
feat. Cecily <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rOCbhBx5Hs>



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Who is a person in your life that exemplifies love and respect for authority figures?
- ❖ Which of Jesus' teachings are difficult for you to follow? Spend some time talking with him about this in prayer.



January 28, 2024

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #71B

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9

1 Corinthians 7:32-35

Mark 1:21-28

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

In today's Gospel passage, we see Jesus teaching and performing a miracle. Both actions reveal more of who he is to the disciples and to the crowd gathered in the synagogue. Jesus' authority is highlighted in this passage and in our reflection. The young people are encouraged to consider the source of Jesus' authority: that he is the Son of God. In the face of unexpected situations, God's power still remains constant, and Jesus' voice the one we should listen to. We choose to follow Jesus because he teaches us about God and shows us the path to our eternal life. Sometimes it is hard to hear Jesus' voice because negative voices are loud in our hearts. However, when we turn to prayer and Scripture, we train ourselves to hear Jesus more clearly.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus' teaching guides us to God.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On January 31, the Church celebrates St. John Bosco, who died in Turin, Italy, in 1888. John Bosco had heart for the young people of the Church and would do what he could to pray with them and help them come closer to God. He started a school for boys that also provided them with vocational training. His course of education included catechetical teaching and encouraging his students to frequently receive reconciliation and the Eucharist. Inspired by the life and work of St. Francis de Sales, John Bosco created the Salesians, a religious order that focuses its

ministry on helping the young people of the Church. He is the patron saint of students and Catholic publishers and editors.

Church Teaching Connection

"Always remember that the Gospel has the power to change lives! Do not forget this. It is the Good News, which transforms us only when we allow ourselves to be transformed by it. That is why I always ask you to have daily contact with the Gospel, to read it every day: a verse, a passage, to meditate on it and even to take it with you everywhere: in your pocket, in your bag. . . . In other words to nourish yourself every day with this inexhaustible source of salvation. Do not forget! Read a passage of the Gospel every day. It is the power that changes us, that transforms us: it changes life, it changes the heart" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, February 1, 2015).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Mark 1:21-28

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

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.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

► **Who has authority in the different areas of your life? To whom do you listen and make sure to obey?**

In today's Gospel, Jesus goes to the town of Capernaum. As he enters the town, we are told that it is the sabbath day. In the Jewish tradition, the sabbath is like our Sunday. As a faithful Jew, Jesus would have participated in services at the synagogue, where the community would come together for prayer, worship, and hearing God's word. It is interesting that Jesus goes to the synagogue to teach; even though this is not his home community he has enough authority in his own ministry and identity as the Son of God that he can share God's word with those in this community.

While Jesus is preaching, an evil spirit speaks through one of the men in attendance. Jesus recognizes this wicked spirit instantly and demands that it come out of the man. The miracle that Jesus does in expelling the spirit from the man is yet another example of Jesus' authority. Jesus heals this man from the evil that has overcome him.

Think of those in your life who, while maybe you wouldn't describe as evil, you might describe as mean, rude, hypocritical, or even a bully. Just as astonished as you would be if someone came up to that person and demanded they were not like that anymore and they listened, that is how shocked the people in this reading are at seeing Jesus demand the evil spirit leave the man. This was a miracle done before their eyes. No one saw it coming.

► **What is something that has surprised you or was unexpected? Was it a good or a bad thing and how did you react?**

Unexpected events catch us off guard. We aren't anticipating them so when they happen, they make us stop and pay attention. We might rethink our plans or decide to do something in response to the unexpected event.

Even in the face of these different or unexpected situations, teaching at a synagogue in a new city or encountering an evil spirit, Jesus remains firm in his identity as the Son of God, which gives him authority in all things. He teaches with authority. The people listen. He demands the demon leaves the man. The spirit has no choice but to listen. Jesus' words have power because Jesus is divine. Yet because he is also fully human, people tend to only see that aspect of him and are quite surprised when he teaches with authority and drives out demons with power.

► **Do you or your peers have authority over anything or in different situations (like in a job, in a club, or on a team)? How did you or they receive that authority? How did you or they act in that position of authority?**

Jesus uses his authority to share the Good News and do the work of building up the kingdom of God. By teaching he is sharing that message, and by casting out evil spirits he is bringing people back to God. He does not use his authority to force people to believe in God but shows them by his actions and confidence in God that following God is the path of life.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 124.

Jesus' word has authority and power.

Jesus' authority comes from his identity as the Son of God.

We are not forced to believe in God; we choose to follow Christ along the path to God.

Act on the Word

Listening to God's Voice

For this activity, you will need index cards, pens, and a way to play the song "The Voice of Truth" by Casting Crowns.

Invite the teens to spread out and get into a comfortable position for this reflection activity. Give each person a note card and pen.

On one side of the index card, have the young people write down lies that the devil might be telling them, like they are not smart enough, pretty enough, rich enough, and so on. Share with them that these negative attitudes often are loud voices in our hearts. It is hard not to listen to them sometimes. On the same side of the index card, have the teens also write down things that have power over them, like social media or the opinions of others.

After several minutes of reflection, have the young people turn over their cards. Play the song "The Voice of Truth" by Casting Crowns for them. Invite them to listen to the message the song is telling us about Jesus. Then have them reflect on the ways they hear the voice of God in their lives. They can think about the voices that raise them up and

encourage them. They can reflect on hearing Scripture proclaimed or reading it in their daily lives. Invite them to write down what God's truth is about themselves and their lives. Remind them that God loves them and will never abandon them. In all situations, they can turn to God and allow his authority and grace to prevail.

Close the activity by encouraging them to take these index cards home with them and look at them throughout the week. As they think of more for each category/side of the card, they can add to it so that it becomes easier for them to tell what voices are not helpful and what voices point them to God.

Closing Prayer

Holy One of God,

in casting evil out of our world

you inaugurated the kingdom of
your Father.

Teach us how to speak boldly

in the face of whatever evil
confronts us.

We draw our strength from you,

our Lord Jesus Christ,

who live and reign with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.