

# Read

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

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

1 Corinthians 7:32-35

Mark 1:21-28

## LIVING THE WORD

### Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 31, 2021



#### REFLECTION

When you do a research project for school, teachers insist you use citations with academic integrity to give credibility to your claims and reassure the reader that you aren't just making stuff up. Similarly, the scribes referenced the wisdom of others as they reminded the faithful to follow the ways of God. Even the prophets began declarations by crediting their source: "Thus says the Lord." Yet Jesus was able to speak a truth that resonated with the depths of the disciples' hearts with the honest preface we find throughout the Gospel, "Amen, I say to you . . . ." Notice that it wasn't self-centered proclamations spouted for personal gain. Jesus didn't name-drop, and he never used his power selfishly. Rather, he deepened the disciples' understanding of God's truth, love, justice, and mercy. He spoke on his own authority that extended beyond profound wisdom to actual exorcisms that freed people from suffering.



#### ACTION

How can you tell the difference between what is true and what is false in the media—between important uncomfortable truths and outlandish clickbait statements intended only to shock and garner ratings? Plenty of folks attempt to astonish people by speaking with authority as they distort partial truths for un-Christlike motives. Media literacy is the ability to use our God-given gift of reason to access, analyze, and evaluate what we hear, see, or read in the news or online. Faith calls us to develop this critical awareness and use our conscience as we engage with information so that we work to foster goodness and truth. Media literacy prompts us to ask key investigative questions—beginning with who created the message and why—to decode and assess the messages we receive.



Explore the Center for  
Media Literacy website:  
<http://www.medialit.org/>

#### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How do you tell the difference between what is true and what is false or a partial truth?
- ❖ Where is the greatest need for media literacy today?



January 31, 2021

## 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

Jesus taught the people in the synagogue with an authority they had not witnessed before that day. This authority was made even clearer when Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to leave, and the spirit had to obey him. Jesus' popularity spread and he called people to respond with *metanoia*, or total transformation of heart and mind. We too are called to conversion of heart and mind in Christ. Such a conversion changes all aspects of our lives. We live in the freedom of God's love, not bound by sin.

**Q FOCUS:** *We have freedom when we live under Jesus' authority.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week we observe the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2. This celebrates the presentation of Jesus to the Lord in the Temple, which Mary and Joseph did in accordance with Jewish law and tradition (Luke 2:22-38). Historically, this day was also called "Candlemas" because during the Middle Ages people would process with candles in observance of the holy day. It also conveys an understanding of Jesus as the light of the world, which is alluded to in Luke 2:32.

### Church Teaching Connection

The Christian faith isn't a list of tasks nor is it a checklist of holydays. Christianity is a faith that encompasses the entire life of the believer. Our faith is meant to transform our hearts and minds utterly and completely. The beliefs we have translate to holy and radical lives that in turn transform the world around us. When our hearts are transformed in Christ, the love of God illuminates every action of our lives (*Lumen fidei*, 26).

## 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:*

► When you hear the phrase "Word of God," what comes to mind?

Today's gospel reading brings us to Capernaum, where Jesus was teaching at a synagogue. Even though we do not hear about the subjects Jesus taught, we know he taught with authority. But what does it mean to teach with authority? The scribes taught the people gathered in the synagogue, as they had done for generations. Certainly, the people listened to the scribes and heeded their words. However, Jesus didn't just teach about the word of God that had been passed on through the generations. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh; he is God, and he is God's promise to his people. When Jesus taught, he taught with the authority of the Word, not just an interpreter of it.

Jesus also demonstrated his authority to the people at the synagogue. A man with an unclean spirit was present, and Jesus commanded the spirit to leave the man. The spirit had to listen to Jesus; it did not have a choice. This is because Jesus, the Son of God, had power and authority over the unclean spirit.

► If you were present, and saw such a miracle, how would you respond?

Those at the synagogue responded in amazement. They would have understood immediately that they were in the presence of someone whose power the world had never seen. Amazement led to people talking about Jesus, and word of his power and authority spread quickly.

Having encountered Jesus, some peoples' hearts would have been humbled and led to a change in their lives. We would say that these people experienced *metanoia*, a Greek word that means a total change in a person's heart and mind, or a conversion. They recognized Jesus as the Messiah and changed their life because of that. Even the unclean spirit recognized Jesus for who he truly was and had to change its behavior. Just by his example of living, Jesus calls us to change our way of living.

► How can Scripture help us to have *metanoia*, or total change of heart and mind?

When our hearts and minds are converted through Christ, we recognize his authority in our lives, and we aim to live out the changes that are in our hearts.

► How does such a transformation manifest itself in our lives? How are our behaviors, choices and actions changed as a result of *metanoia*?

When we are changed by Christ, we voluntarily place ourselves under his authority. People often reject the idea of authority, but when we are under Christ, his authority gives us freedom. We are free from the chains of sin that limit and harm our relationship with God and with others. We are free to give of ourselves because we know that there is nothing else that can control except the love of God.

► How else might we be free? What does this freedom look like in our daily activities?

## 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 entered the synagogue and taught with an authority the people hadn't witnessed.**

**We can be transformed in Christ; this transformation is called *metanoia*.**

**There is freedom in the authority of Jesus over our lives.**

## Act on the Word

### Christ's Authority Transforms Us

You will invite some adults or older teens to share stories of their experiences with encountering God and how those encounters transformed them.

For the first part of this activity, the teens will examine the lives of saints to learn about the transformation (or *metanoia*) that takes place in the lives of the saints as they give themselves to God. The young people may work in small groups or pairs; each group or pair will select one saint to research. Have them look through books or websites about Catholic saints. The teens may already know something about the saint, but have them look for information about the saint with the following questions in mind:

- ✧ Did the saint have a conversion experience? How did that experience affect the saint's daily life?
- ✧ How did the saint allow God to have authority over their life?
- ✧ How did the saint have freedom in his or her love for God and others?

In the second part of this activity, invite some adults or older teens to share their own *metanoia* experiences with the group. Ask them to touch on topics such as how and when transformation occurred, how it felt, and what they thought about it. Ask them to describe how it influenced their decisions, life choices, and their day-to-day experiences in life. If any of the young people in the group feel called to, they can also share their experiences of encounter and transformation.

### Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,  
cast out the destructive forces in our lives.  
By your word, we pray,  
awaken us, touch our hearts, and  
change our thinking.  
You live and reign with God the Father in the  
unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one 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](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.