

February 1, 2009
4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

“...there was something profound and irresistible in Jesus”.

In today's Gospel passage Mark treats the subject of Jesus' authority. The people in the synagogue at Capernaum marvel at Jesus' teaching and the way He delivers it. He does not speak theoretically or abstractly, like the Scribes or the learned ones. He speaks from experience and knowledge gained from His time of prayer in the presence of His Father, and from His unity with the Holy Spirit that dwells within Him. Jesus has a power and a presence unlike anything the people have seen or heard before.

While the members of the synagogue do not know the source of Jesus' authority, an unclean spirit does. Frightened by the power of Jesus, the unclean spirit tries to harness that power and divert it by naming it aloud. He calls Jesus by name and identifies Him as the Holy One of God. He asks Jesus, “Have you come here to destroy us?” The question is meant to throw fear into the crowd who might feel that their own sins or weaknesses could be exposed or punished in the presence of the Holy One.

In an even greater demonstration of authority Jesus silences the demon and exorcises it, driving it out of the man it inhabited. The crowd is amazed and even more interested in Jesus' identity and His teaching. They spread the news of Him throughout all of Galilee, so that crowds begin to seek Jesus out, and follow Him.

Mark is telling us that there was something profound and irresistible in Jesus that drew people to Him and caused them to be changed, or, more accurately, transformed. He does this so that we will also follow Jesus through the pages of the Gospel, through the miracles and healings, the teachings and events, through the suffering and death of the cross, and the triumph of the resurrection and the conferral of the Holy Spirit.

Mark wants us to know that this Jesus had power like the world had never seen...a power that can transform and save us all across the ages.

God bless you.

Fr. Pat