



## 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE B

Fr. David Rosenberg  
Institute for Spiritual Direction

*The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority. Mark 1:22*

Mark's gospel was the first written gospel, composed around the year 70 AD. Christians in that era were well catechized on the nativity of Jesus and the life of the Holy Family through oral tradition that was told apart from Mark's account of the ministry of Jesus. It is believed that for this reason, Mark begins his gospel with Jesus at around the age of 30, recording the events of his three years of ministry leading up to his passion, death and resurrection.

Jesus, the great teacher, by example shows us how we are to be disciples. He is baptized by John the Baptist, and then driven into a desert experience where he battles with Satan. But returning victorious over the early battle of good versus evil, Jesus immediately enters into his public ministry. Mark describes this early ministry in today's story of the cure of the man with the unclean spirit. This inspires the disciples, and us, with truth about what Jesus is.

Mark records for the first time Jesus' God-given authority. This is meant to inspire us to desire the mantle of Jesus, through our priestly baptism, so that the Body of Christ may carry on his mission, in apostolic succession, from generation to generation. Through this authority, Jesus, and the baptized by extension, drive out evil spirits. As the first miracle recorded by Mark, it is a clear sign that in Jesus' presence, the power of evil is exercised.

The reaction of the demon reveals to us who Jesus is. Satan well knows Jesus, twice calling him by name, addressing him as "Jesus of Nazareth" and "the Holy One of God." To name your enemy is to have power over him. But, as demonstrated earlier in the desert, Satan was powerless before Jesus. Satan knows Jesus had "*come to destroy*" evil (1:24). In recognizing Jesus' power, Satan recognized Jesus as the Messiah with authority over evil spirits.

In reflection, Mark is showing us the power of Jesus. Through grace, we can freely accept Jesus and the power he exercises over our lives. Jesus of Nazareth is more than just an historical figure. He is the Son of God, sent into the world to restore all people to a proper relationship with God.

Do we know Jesus as the "*Holy One of God*" Mk 1:24? Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. This week, let us seek to acknowledge this power and authority in our lives. Let us allow him to exercise this power to heal us, to restore us to the Father, to adapt our Rule of Life to seek holiness as a first impulse, and turn away from sin.

Mark leads us early in his gospel account to Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the one sent by God with all authority and power. We cry out the name of Jesus as did the man possessed by the unclean spirit. The miracles of Jesus in the gospels witness to the reality of who he is. In Lectio Divina, may we seek Jesus as the Holy One of God and let him work in our lives.

**A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark**

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.

***The Gospel of the Lord***

