

January 31, 2021
4th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Deut 18:15-20
Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9
1 Cor 7:32-35
Mk 1:21-28

THE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS!

An old man answered a knock on his door one morning. An electric company worker handed him a piece of paper stating that the electric company would like to run a power line through his pasture. The old man said, "**No.**" "**Legally, the papers state that we have the authority to do it.**" replied the worker.

As the worker turned and left returning to his co-workers in the field, the man went to his barn and turned his bull loose into the pasture. As the bull rumbled toward the workers in the field, the man yelled, "**Show him your papers! Show him your papers!**"

The electric company **workers** had the **authority**, but the **bull** has the **power!**

Authority and **power** are not separate entity in Jesus. **Authority** and **power** are rolled into **one** in his person. And we see that in the gospel proclaimed today. The gospel says that Jesus went to the synagogue and started to teach. The people who heard him teach were amazed for 'he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.' On the other hand, Jesus' power was manifested when he healed the man possessed by an unclean spirit. His power was able to liberate the man from bondage/captivity. The expulsion of the evil spirit from the man showed that Jesus' power was superior more than anything else. What Jesus did attest/corroborate that good will always triumph over evil.

The **authority** and **power** of Jesus was not, in any way, used to control or manipulate people. Rather, he used it to liberate people from things/attitudes contrary to God. In this gospel episode, for example, he used his **authority** and **power** to set the man free from the unclean spirit. It was clear to Jesus that his **authority** and **power** are meant to make the lives of the people better. He knew that his **authority** and **power** were to be used to free the people 'from all those spirits which make them deaf, dumb, blind, lame, and paralyzed, physically and spiritually.'

The Lord Jesus liberated the man from unclean spirit. With his **authority** and **power**, he can liberate us too from the 'evil spirits' of fear, jealousy, indifference, anger, envy, addictions, compulsions, selfishness, resentment, and hostility. He can always drive out the 'demon' that causes us to sin. The challenging step though is for us to humbly submit ourselves to his **authority** and **power** for him to expel the 'evil spirits' in us. If we don't, he cannot say to the unclean spirit in us: "**Quiet! Come out of him!**" Thus, we ask

ourselves: **Are we willing to surrender our lives to the authority and power of Jesus? What are the 'evil spirits/demons' in us that He needs to drive out?**

St. Paul was the author of the 2nd reading that we have heard. We know his story. Prior to his conversion, he was a fierce persecutor of Christians. He was, in a way, 'possessed by an unclean spirit.' However, when he encountered and heard the voice of the Lord Jesus and opened his heart, things started to change. He was formed and transformed by the Lord Jesus from being a persecutor of Christians to becoming one of the best preachers of the faith. Indeed, St. Paul exemplified to us that a life surrendered into the **authority** and **power** of Christ can be changed and bear fruit abundantly.

Our Eucharistic celebration tells us the **authority** and **power** of the Lord Jesus. At the same time, our celebration calls us to surrender our lives to his **authority** and **power**. **Are we ready to really surrender our lives to him today?**

Let me end my homily by echoing the words of the psalmist: **"If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."**

God bless us all!