

Homily – Mk 1: 21-28
4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
30/ 31 January 2021, Sooeey

“His teaching made a deep impression on them because He taught them with authority, not like the Scribes and the Pharisees”.

During the early days of the nineteenth century, a wealthy plantation owner was attracted by the heartbreaking sobs of a slave girl who was about to step up to the auction block to be sold. Moved by a momentary impulse of compassion, he bought her at a very high price and then disappeared in the crowd. When the auction was over, the clerk came to the sobbing girl and handed her the bill of sale. To her astonishment, the plantation owner had written ‘Free’ over the paper that should have delivered her to him as his possession. She stood speechless, as one by one the other slaves were claimed by their owners and dragged away. Suddenly, she threw herself at the feet of the clerk and exclaimed: “Where is the man who bought me? I must find him! He has set me free! I must serve him as long as I live!”

Well, the Readings of today pose a similar and personal question to each of us. Are we ready to surrender our

lives to Jesus who set us free and who taught us with divine authority?

Today's first reading tells us that a true prophet like Moses speaks with authority because it is God Who speaks through him. After the Babylonian exile, the Jewish priests began to interpret the words of Moses given in the first reading, namely, "*a prophet like me,*" as referring to one individual, the expected Messiah. Yes! It refers to Jesus, the "preacher with authority,".

And in today's Gospel, Mark describes one sample Sabbath day of Jesus' public life. We see Jesus joining in public worship in the synagogue as a practicing Jew, healing the sick, driving out evil spirits and praying privately. And people immediately noticed that Jesus teaches with authority and heals with Divine power. Jesus explains the Scriptures with complete confidence, and when questioned by people, He answered with authority.

Well, I suppose most of you are familiar with Robin Sharma, a Canadian writer and leadership speaker who has authored many bestselling books like: 'The Monk who sold his Ferrari, Who will cry when you die, The Secret Letters of the Monk who sold His Ferrari etc'. One of his books I read some time back has the title:

“The Leader who had no Title”, a magnificent book that tells us that all of us are called to be leaders and that we do not need titles to be authentic leaders. An authentic leader is one who can inspire people.

Well, we as Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the greatest leader of the human race. And we know that Jesus was a leader without titles. He was not a Rabbi, and yet as we read in the Gospel of today, “He taught with authority, not like the scribes and the Pharisees who had titles, who had juridical legal authority”. And He made a deep impression on them.

And what is the secret of the leadership of Jesus? Well, it could be summarized in one word: “Authenticity”. As we often say, “Jesus walked the talk”. A leader is one who leads more by his example than by his words. The teachings of Jesus made tremendous impression on the people, because he was not giving a sermon, instead, He was living a sermon. Yes! A true leader ensures that his deeds reflect his words. Robin Sharma would beautifully put it thus: “we have to make sure that our video is in sync with our audio”.

And Jesus as a true leader comes among us to say: that there is a Gospel, that there is a teaching to honour our original dignity, as He did.

The following parable is told in the Rabbinic tradition :
“When the Rabbi asked the students, ‘when is night over and when does day begin?’ ‘When does darkness cease and when does light begin?’ And one student says: ‘when looking at from a distance, if you can see the difference between a dog and a sheep’, and another says, ‘when you can see the difference between a fig tree and an Olive tree’, and a third says: ‘when you can see the lines on the palm of your hand, the night is over and the day has begun. And the Rabbi says: “No”.
“When you can look in the face of every human being, and see your brother and your sister, until that time, it is still night and we are still in darkness.

Dear brothers and sisters, ‘have we honoured the nobility within us? And are we able to see the presence of God in all people? If we could see God in every one, we become inspirational leaders. Every one of us has that obligation as parents, as teachers, as friends, as neighbours, and as siblings: that power to inspire, influence, and elevate the other by the gift of a great example. And we need no titles to do that. And the more authentic we are in our life, the more influential leaders we will be.

I suppose we have all heard that well known quote from “One Solitary Life” a sermon excerpt of James Allan

Francis of happy memories from Canada: “All the armies that ever marched, All the navies that ever sailed, All the parliaments that ever sat, All the kings that ever reigned have not influenced the human race as that one solitary life of Jesus Christ”. Yes! That solitary life has influenced human life, than anyone else in human history. He is the most authentic leader, the most powerful leader, the most inspirational leader, because He taught by His life. May we too, as His followers, be more like Him day by day.

God bless you all, **Amen.**