

28. January 2024

The authority of Jesus

Mk 1:21-28

And they went into Caper'na-um; and immediately on the sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and 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." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

Jesus taught and acted with authority... People noticed this and perceived the difference with the teaching of the scribes.

It is certainly correct to point out that, in the case of Jesus, it is a divine Person who transmits the Word to men, so that the difference is obvious. But the Lord wished to share His authority with His own. He entrusted His disciples to carry out in His name - and therefore also in His authority - all the works that He Himself had done in the world (cf. Mt 10:7-8). We know many examples of how this authority that had been transferred to them began to work in the apostles: conversions, signs and miracles in the Name of Jesus.

But in what does this authority consist and how does it differ from the "doctrine of the scribes"?

The authority is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation. When Peter preached after the descent of the Holy Spirit, people were touched by his words and a great multitude came to believe that day (cf. Acts 2:37-38,41). The authority became effective, because the proclamation of the Gospel fully corresponded to the intentions

of the Spirit of God, who, for His part, awakened the stirring and faith in those who listened to the preaching of the apostles. By collaborating with the Holy Spirit, the authority of Jesus in the proclamation becomes effective.

There may be sermons and discourses in which, although delivered by people entrusted with this ministry, the living presence of the Holy Spirit is not very much in evidence. Perhaps they speak more of what they have in their memory or draw on their theological knowledge; but the inspiration is lacking. In this way, the understanding of the hearers may be instructed, but their hearts will hardly be touched. If, moreover, the clear proclamation of the Gospel is weakened by all kinds of human additions, the hearers will hardly be shaken and brought to a deeper conversion.

For this authority in which the Lord wants to share with us to become effective, the concrete inspiration of the Holy Spirit is needed.

Another aspect of Jesus' authority that we see in today's Gospel is His power over demons. The Lord has come to destroy the works of the Devil (cf. 1 Jn 3:8), and so the hour of judgement has come for the unclean spirits: "*Have you come to destroy us?*" - shouts the devil before Jesus commands him to be quiet and casts him out.

We can see that here, in the expulsion of these unclean spirits, the authority of the Lord is at work. And the Lord also transfers this power to His disciples (cf. Mt 10:1). This does not only apply to exorcists who have a special assignment from the bishop, but all Christians can participate in various ways in this authority of Jesus.

And once again the Holy Spirit intervenes, in whose presence the evil spirits must flee! When He sheds His radiant light on souls, when the clear doctrine of the Church is proclaimed and when our prayer gains authority through His presence, then the demons have little ground left to act and are forced to flee.

After the three temptations of Jesus in the desert, each of which He rejected with the Word of God, it is written that the Devil departed from the Lord for a time (cf. Lk 4:13). Likewise, if we reject in the Name of Jesus the temptations that attack us, we weaken the strength of the Evil One, while we are strengthened for the spiritual path. So, in the authority of Jesus we are never helpless, at the mercy of the powers of evil;

but, in the Lord, we can be victorious. However, the battle will last until God finally separates the light from the darkness.

The key to the unfolding of Jesus' authority, which He transfers to His disciples, is the living relationship with the Holy Spirit. If we cultivate and deepen it day by day, our words and deeds will become more and more luminous, and the power of Jesus will become effective through our lives.