

10. January 2023

The authority of Jesus

Mk 1:21-28

They went as far as Capernaum, and at once on the Sabbath he went into the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority. And at once in their synagogue there was a man with an unclean spirit, and he shouted, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked it saying, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking one another what it all meant, saying, 'Here is a teaching that is new, and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him.' And his reputation at once spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.

Jesus teaches and acts with authority... People perceive this and notice the difference in relation to the teaching of the scribes.

Of course, in the case of Jesus, it is a divine Person who transmits the Word to the people, so that the difference is obvious. However, 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 which He had also carried out in the world (cf. Mt 10:7-8). We know many examples that show us how this authority conferred on them began to manifest itself in the apostles: conversions, signs and miracles that took place in the Name of Jesus.

Now, in what does the authority consist, and how does it differ from the "teaching of the scribes"?

This authority is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation. When Peter preached after the Holy Spirit had descended upon him, people were touched by his words and many believed and were baptised (cf. Acts 2:37-38,41). The authority became effective because the proclamation of the gospel fully corresponded to the intentions of the Holy Spirit, who awakened the stirring and faith in those who listened to the

apostles. By cooperating with the Holy Spirit, the authority of Jesus is present in the proclamation.

On the other hand, there may be preaching and discourses in which, although delivered by persons entrusted with this ministry, the living presence of the Holy Spirit is not very noticeable. Perhaps they speak more of what is in their memory or draw on their theological knowledge; but the inspiration is lacking. Then the hearers' intellect may be instructed, but the heart 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 come to a deeper conversion.

In order for the authority that the Lord wants to share with us to become effective, the concrete inspiration of the Holy Spirit is needed.

A further aspect of the Lord's authority in today's Gospel is his dominion 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 silent.

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

And again it is the Holy Spirit, in whose presence the evil spirits cannot resist and 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 yield.

After the three temptations that Jesus suffered 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 are weakening the strength of the Evil One, while we ourselves 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 even gain the upper hand. However, we will be engaged in the battle until God separates the light from the darkness.

The key to the unfolding in the faithful of the authority Jesus confers on them lies in a living relationship with the Holy Spirit. If we cultivate and deepen it day by day, then our words and deeds will be ever more radiant, and the authority of Jesus will be made effective through our lives.