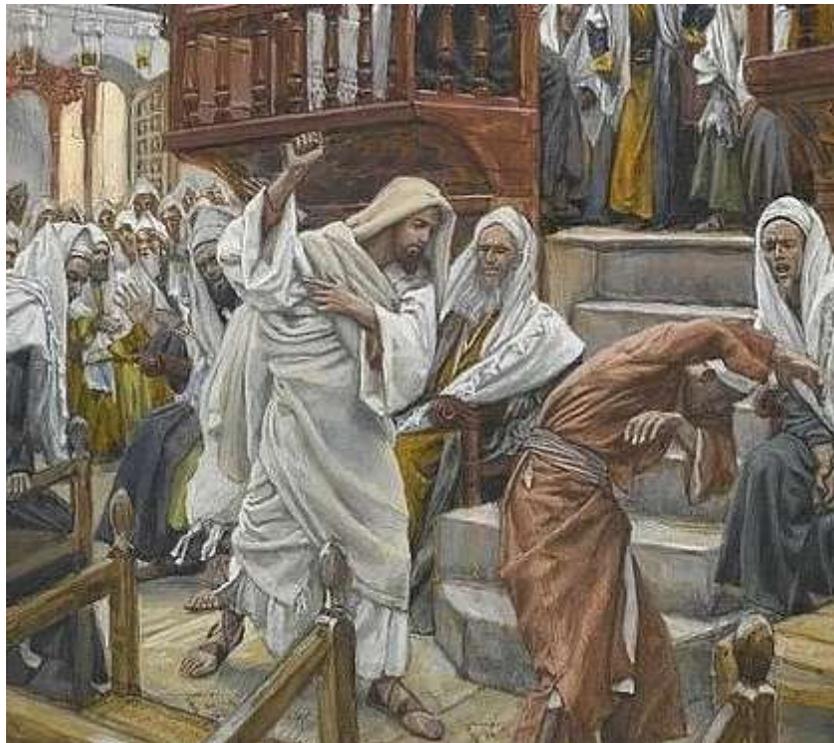


The Church of Saint Boniface

January 31, 2021

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time



The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him.

All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this?"

(Mark 1 26-27)

UN-QUIET WORD FOR TODAY

Who's the best teacher you've had?

What made them so good?

Jesus enters a synagogue in Capernaum (A Synagogue is a place of assembly used by Jewish communities primarily for public worship and instruction). His teaching is astonishing; he teaches as one having 'authority' and not as the scribes (the scribes are often

thought of as ones who speak in plain platitudes). But what is it about this new teaching? What kind of 'new authority'/power does it possess unlike the 'teachers of the time'? What makes him so good?

Firstly, Jesus is prophetic—he speaks as a prophet does. A prophet (as the first reading indicates) is one who speaks a word that is not his own. Jesus proclaims/speaks God's word (divine word). Jesus is sent by the Father and everything he accomplishes is to give glory to the Father and further the kingdom of God. His message and mission is not a 'self-mission'. There is a deep transparency and integrity about what Jesus does. It is 'not about him'.

Secondly Jesus' message is 'concerned'. It reveals God's concern for the world and its transformation but also it is a message that is filled with human sympathy and compassion. It is a message 'for others'. Jesus is an 'involved' communicator. He speaks as one who walks the same road as the listener; as one who has the same experiences; as one who will not abandon the listener but will lead them to a 'transformed life'. In the words of Pope Francis: 'He finds people where they are', in that way his message is always relevant and contemporary.

It helps also that Jesus' message is backed up with divine power and miracles. These (like the one we listen to today in the gospel) showcase or give credence to him as a divine teacher and the son of God.

"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!"

What then might be our challenge or the point for our reflection?

Do we give this Divine Teacher our undivided attention? What anxieties must we free ourselves of, to listen to him more? How giving undivided attention can be hard and require great discipline!

By our Baptism we are 'prophets' which means 'be concerned'. Does the word of God that we listen to every Sunday and at the Eucharist, merely 'stay' with us or die with us or does it go silent with us?

What makes us afraid of speaking the Word of Truth in today's world? How can we make it a Word 'for others'? A Word that prompts us to live a life of Christian witness!

A model for us is Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Find time to read about her life.

"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?"

(Mark 1, 25-27)

— Father Anthony

MASS INTENTIONS

Feb. 4	8:00 AM	Families of those who have died in the pandemic , by Mary O'Malley
Feb. 5	8:00 AM	Jean Alves , by Robert & Kelly DiGeronimo
Feb. 6	4:00 PM	Louis Arruda (16th Anniversary), by his great-grandchildren
Feb. 7	8:00 AM	Jeanne Alves , by Robert & Kelly DiGeronimo
	10:30 AM	Michael Brisson (7th Anniversary), by his mother
Feb. 11	8:00 AM	All Lonely People , by Mary O'Malley
Feb. 14	8:00 AM	Louis & Anita Siegel , by the McQuaid family
	10:30 AM	Virginia Tedesco , who lost her child prematurely in the womb, by John & Tina Huntoon

PRAY THE ROSARY every Saturday at 3:30 PM in the church, led by members of the Saint Boniface Knights of Columbus.

Tax Statements: Please call or email the parish office if you would like a 2020 Contribution Statement mailed to you.



For the month of February 2021, St. Boniface will receive a \$1 donation from each purchase of the \$2.50 reusable Fight Hunger Bag at the Hannaford store located at 333 Mass Ave., Lunenburg. Funds will be used toward our parish support of food and supplies for the Northstar Family Shelter.

SAINT BONIFACE PARTNERS IN CHARITY 2021

This Diocesan appeal provides critical support for 27 agencies and ministries that are sources of hope to so many people during this pandemic. Our goal for this year is \$22,500 — we have so far raised \$11,320 (over half way there!).

Envelopes are available at church entrances, which you can mail with your donation or drop in our collection basket. You can also visit the Parish website to donate online, or text the word DONATE to 84576.

Thank you for your support.

Time for a Chuckle...

It is reported that these notices actually appeared in church bulletins or were announced at church services.

- ✠ Pot-luck supper Sunday at 5:00 p.m. Prayer and medication to follow.
- ✠ Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands.
- ✠ Miss Charlene Mason sang, "I Will Not Pass This Way Again," giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

COLLECTION REPORT

January 24	
– Sunday Offering	\$ 3,181
– Fuel/Maintenance	195
– Other	5
Total	\$ 3,381

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Give to our parish whether you're in the pews or not! Many parishioners have been making their weekly offerings online. It's secure, convenient and easy to make one-time or recurring donations at www.stboniface-lunenburg.org



This February 7-14, 2021
we will celebrate
National Marriage Week!

This annual observance is a great prompt for everyone to reflect on the gift marriage is to our Church and our country, as well as an opportunity for couples to build up their own marriages.

This year's theme is:

To Have, To Hold, To Honor.

Visit ForYourMarriage.org or
USCCB.ORG for more...

For Your Marriage helps couples at all stages of life to understand and live God's plan for happy, holy marriages by providing educational and spiritual resources.

Saints of the Week

A Specific Responsibility

The readings deal with teaching authority. The first reading deals with the authority of Moses; the third with the authority of Jesus. The response to Psalm 95 speaks of not hardening our **hearts when we hear God's voice.**

There are several 'voices' that speak to us with authority. One is the Scripture. Another is the hierarchy of the Church, which speaks authoritatively on matters of doctrine as well as on issues of personal morality and social justice.

The First Reading speaks of true and false prophets: those who speak the words God puts in their mouths, and **those who claim to speak in God's name** but speak words God has not commanded them to speak.

Society is often a 'false prophet,' claiming to speak the truth and even to be **'Christian,'** but at the same time glorifying war and oppressing the poor.

The Church, in its teaching on personal and social morality, is a true prophet, **faithful to God's revealed word.**

The Church has the right, indeed the duty, to proclaim justice on the social, national and international level, and to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of man and his very salvation demand it.

The Church, indeed, is not alone responsible for justice in the world; however, she has a proper and specific responsibility which is identified with her mission of giving witness before the world of the need for love and justice contained in the Gospel message, a witness to be carried out in Church institutions themselves and in the lives of Christians.

Synod of Bishops
Justice in the World
1971: 36

— Gerald Darring

February 1.

SAINT ANSGAR

Saint Ansgar was a Benedictine missionary who spent his life trying to convert northern Europe. It seems for every step he took forward, he ended up taking **two backward.** Yet, he didn't seem to become discouraged. He kept his focus on serving the poor wherever he was.

Saint Ansgar is the patron saint of Denmark.



February 2.

PRESENTATION of the LORD

Being an observant Jewish couple, it stands to reason that Mary and Joseph went to the Temple for Mary's purification—as prescribed by Mosaic Law—40 days after Jesus' birth. The blessing of candles and the procession of light were added to this feast, giving it the popular name "Candlemas."



February 3.

SAINT BLAISE

Popularly known as the saint who protects from ailments of the throat, Saint Blaise was a bishop and martyr of the fourth century. We know little else about him, except that he suffered persecution, even after the Edict of Toleration was to have freed the Roman world for worship.

Saint Blaise is the patron saint of throat ailments.



February 4.

SAINT JOSEPH of LEONISSA

Saint Joseph of Leonissa was known for his austerity of life and single-minded commitment to preaching. Arrested and warned to change his ways, Saint Joseph returned to his former behavior and was re-arrested and condemned to die. He escaped, however, and continued a life of preaching.



February 5.

SAINT AGATHA

One of the four virgin martyrs celebrated in the Catholic calendar of saints, Saint Agatha was arrested during the persecution of Decius in 251. Tortured for her beauty and tempted to violate her chastity, Agatha was eventually martyred.

Saint Agatha is the patron saint of diseases of the breast and nurses.



Authority and Honor

Middle Eastern cultures and indeed a large part of the ancient and modern world believe in spirits, good and bad. The West has allowed science and particularly the medical sciences to explain instances of "human beings possessed by spirits" in a different way. This makes the present story difficult for Westerners to accept and appreciate. From a Middle Eastern perspective, the meaning of the story is very plain. Today's reflection invites Westerners to consider how wisely or imprudently they use their power.

Jesus the Artisan Who Teaches

It is not the unclean spirit and the possessed man that trouble Jesus' audience. These were common in their world. They are disturbed because Jesus is acting totally out of line with his inherited status. This artisan from Nazareth dares to teach "as one having authority" in the Capernaum synagogue. Who gave him authority to teach?

Jesus the Teacher with Power over Spirits

As the listeners puzzle over Jesus' behavior, his teaching, and his manner of teaching, a man possessed by an unclean spirit interrupts the setting by shrieking.

Our ancestors in the faith believed that spirits were more powerful than human beings but less powerful than God.

Spirits readily interfered (or intervened) in human life, sometimes benevolently, sometimes capriciously, and sometimes malevolently. They had power to control human behavior.

The spirit who possessed the man in the synagogue is central in this story because he knows Jesus' identity far better than Jesus' compatriots do. He knows Jesus is "the Holy One of God."

But much to the amazement of the people, Jesus is not controlled or cowed by this unclean spirit. Instead, Jesus shows that his power is stronger than that of the unclean spirit. Jesus commands the it to come out of the man, and it does!

The people now have an answer to why Jesus teaches "with authority, and not as the scribes." Clearly, Jesus possesses powers stronger than those of ordinary human beings. Some Greek manuscripts have variant readings of the people's response to Jesus in Mark 1:27: "What is this? A new teaching? With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

Authority is a major problem for Jesus' contemporaries. No one denies the mighty deeds of power that Jesus performs. What troubles them is the source of his authority. Is it God? (Mark, of course, has already told this to his listeners and readers a number of times.) Or is it the world of the other, lesser gods and spirits?

The people in the synagogue at Capernaum have not yet decided. The fact, however, is very clear. Jesus the artisan from Nazareth has authority and effective power to do what he does. He behaves not shamefully, out of alignment with his status, but rather quite honorably. And this is why Mark concludes by noting: "At once his reputation [honor] began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee."

This final note affects the honor of both Jesus and the healed man. The gossip network proclaims a new honor status for Jesus (teaches with authority; has power over unclean spirits) that contrasts with his status "of Nazareth." It also restores honor to the man now released from the power of unclean spirits. He can reclaim his rightful place in the community.

The Western tendency to rationalize the ancient understanding of spirits is rooted in the fact that Westerners have much more power over their lives and circumstances than the ancients believed that they for their part had. Today's reflection invites Westerners to consider how wisely or imprudently they use their power.

— John J. Pilch

Please Help Support Our Retired Priests

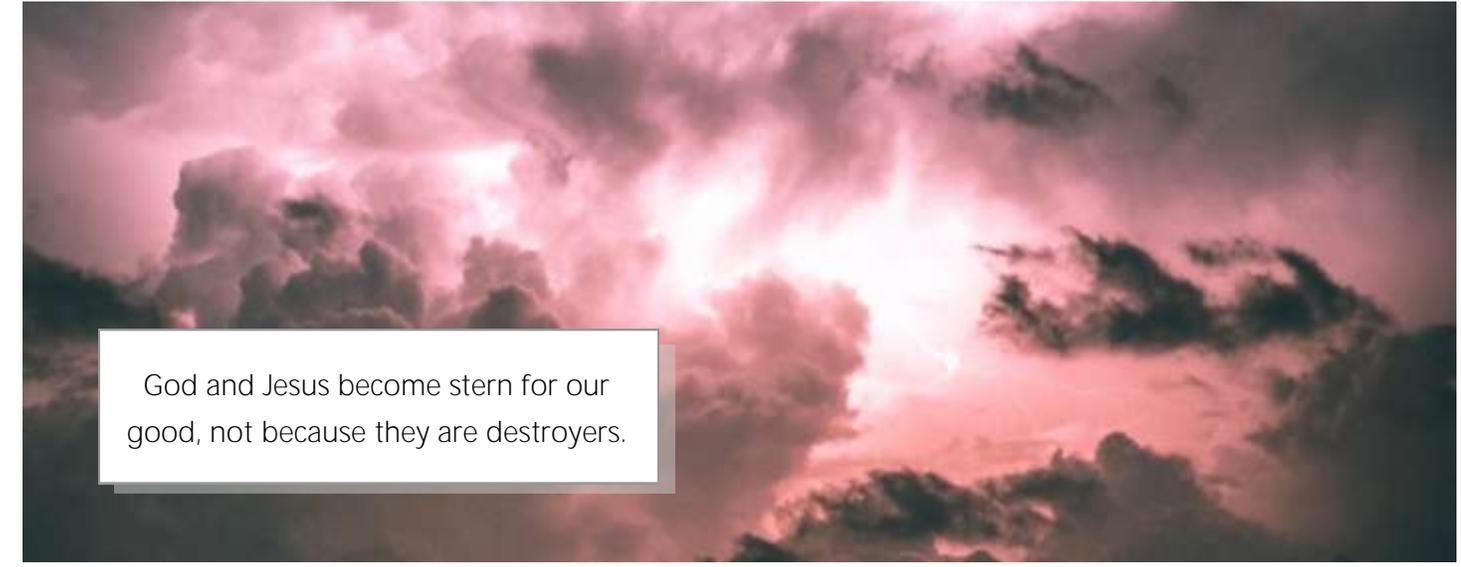
We must do all that we can to ensure that our retired priests, who have served the Church and the Diocese of Worcester so faithfully, are taken care of in their later years. On Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021, a Diocesan collection exclusively for priest retirement will be taken up.

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus, S.T.D.
Bishop of Worcester

Daniel P. Reilly, bishop emeritus of the Diocese of Worcester, sings a rousing rendition of "Danny Boy" at his 90th birthday celebration.

Photo:
The Catholic Free Press





God and Jesus become stern for our good, not because they are destroyers.

Fear

"If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts."

Words from the Psalm for Sunday.

As a composer, I can understand some of the devices I might use to make a musical setting of this Psalm. But when I hear them I don't really concentrate on any one or the other word. I am taken away by their meaning.

Sunday's Readings give a similar command. We are told to hear with our hearts the word of God, not to get sidetracked.

By what?

The First Reading offers an answer. Moses quotes God's words:

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kin, and will put my words into his mouth.

Moses has acted as intermediary between God and the people, and now they are promised another mediator between them and the God they fear.

Fear?

Yes. If you have a bible handy, look at people's reaction to God's gift of the ten commandments. There the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai in great fire and thunder and the blare of trumpets! The people understandably became afraid and trembled and stood far off.

"Don't make us listen to that voice again, or see that great fire again, because we might die from it."

In today's First Reading, Moses reminds them of this reaction. Fear had frightened the people away from God. They did not even hear the word of God because dread had deadened their hearts.

Do we ever find God too large and threatening for our small selves? Do we ever want to ignore such a voice, especially when it is speaking commandments that go against what we find much easier?

Television and so many movies depict the joys of sins that make them part of the landscape and hard to resist! We can be lured. Maybe we take the name of the Lord our God in vain. Or miss Mass on Sunday. Or—you know the rest—dishonor our parents or desire to commit adultery, or steal or lie, or lust after already committed wives or husbands in spite of their relationships—or ours. Isn't such behavior common in today's world?

But God's voice is a lure also, especially as it evokes the psalm setting, as in the Second Reading. We are to be wrapped in the luxury of God's words, to bask in the beauty of a love that only wants our own good. St Paul says "I should like you to be free of anxieties."

So, would we have been afraid of Jesus as well? In the Gospel, we find him teaching "as one having authority." I suppose the answer, then, is yes. He drove a devil out of the man in the synagogue, who, notice, was violently afraid, no joke about it. Jesus gave a command and "the unclean spirit convulsed [the man] and with a loud cry came out of him."

Notice: God and Jesus become stern for our good, not because they are destroyers. Destruction is what they are trying to get us to leave behind.

We sing joyfully to the Lord, the psalm says.

All rebukes from the Lord are for our own good. If today we hear God's voice and listen to it and don't harden our hearts out of fear, maybe we will find this out.

Saint Boniface Church

817 Massachusetts Avenue, Lunenburg, MA 01462

Parish Office: 978-582-4008 email: stbonifaceparish@verizon.net

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Parish Office Hours

Monday / Wednesday / Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (closed 12:00 – 1:00 PM)

The Celebration of the Eucharist

Sunday: 8:00 AM, 10:30 AM, 6:00 PM

Saturday Vigil: 4:00 PM

Summer Sunday Mass schedule: 9:00 AM
(Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend)

Weekday Masses: 8:00 AM, Wednesday/Thursday/Friday

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (Confession) Saturday 3:00 - 3:30 p.m. or by appointment.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM Adults are baptized at the Easter Vigil as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Infant and child Baptisms are by arrangement.

FIRST EUCHARIST Preparation begins in grade one and includes classes, retreats, and home instruction. Children receive First Eucharist in grade two.

CONFIRMATION Our Confirmation program begins in the 9th grade; students are confirmed in the spring of the 10th grade. For young adults who have been baptized but not yet confirmed, contact the parish office.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY It is the policy of the Diocese of Worcester that a couple should contact the parish at least one year prior to the anticipated date of their wedding to allow sufficient time to carry out the various steps of the marriage preparation process. It is important that arrangements be made with the church before plans are made with reception halls, caterers, etc.

ANNOINTING OF THE SICK Please call the parish office 978-582-4008 or email Fr. Anthony at stbonifaceparish@verizon.net or Nancy Cieri 978-582-6983 nancycieri@comcast.net to arrange these visits.

PRAYER LINE MINISTRY If you or someone you know needs prayers or if you would like to be a part of this ministry of those who pray for the needs of neighbors, please contact Sue Cote 978-582-0404 sj33@msn.com.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #16480 *In Service to One. In Service to all.* Members meet in the Parish Hall on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 PM. Any Catholic men over 18 who are interested in joining the Knights should contact Grand Knight Peter Bak (978-403-5119) or Deputy Grand Knight Claude Poirier (978-660-3202), or email kofc16480@gmail.com.

PARISH STAFF:

	<i>phone</i>	<i>email</i>
Rev. Anthony Mpagi, Pastor	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Jo-Anne Poirier, Administrative Assistant	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Lucy Marcil, Religious Education Coordinator	978-502-7993	lmarcil419@gmail.com
Claire Garrity Neas, Music Ministry	617-823-4237	cmkakosgarrity@aol.com
Louise Nadeau, Sacristan		
Ministry Schedule	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Nina Charpentier, Dir. Early Childhood/PreK	978-582-7110	

Newcomers to St. Boniface are invited and encouraged to formally register as members of the parish so that we may stay in touch with you with faith formation news, notices of special events, volunteer opportunities, and more.

Registration forms are available at the doors of the church, the parish office, or on our website.

Please note that you must be registered for at least six months before we can issue any verification of your status as a parishioner for godparent or sponsor letters.

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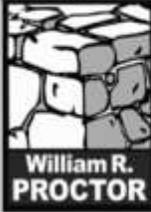
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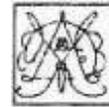
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