

**Sunday, Fourth Sunday, Year B, January 28, 2024. He spoke with authority.**

We celebrate the fourth Sunday in ordinary time on the church's liturgical calendar. In our first reading, Moses gave the Israelites hope that the Lord would send a prophet like him to tell them what God asked them to do. This prophet will arise from within them, and He shall be the promised messiah who will bring salvation to the world. His message is one of holiness. In our second reading, St. Paul emphasizes that holiness remains the yardstick of serving God and worshipping him with undivided attention, whether we are priests, religious, or married persons. In his ministry, Jesus manifested his authority in words and in deeds as God's chosen one. Therefore, as Christians, we are urged to give our undivided attention to Jesus Christ, the epitome of authority.

In the gospel reading, the people affirm that he spoke with authority; indeed, his authority came from God himself. The Greek word for authority is **Exousia**, meaning- power, right, liberty, jurisdiction, ability to choose or control. His authority was not of domination, conquest, power, or liberty to do what you want. **Exousia**, in this sense, is total submission to doing the will of His Father. "I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me." John 5:30.

The **exousia** of Jesus is that of love, compassion, and doing good to the needy. In John gospel 6:1-15 He fed five thousand people. In Luke 15:11, he welcomed and forgave the prodigal son; in John 4:1-39 He gave the Samaritans opportunities to receive the word of God and incorporated them into God's plans of salvation, and in today's gospel, He helped the man with an unclean spirit.

The lesson from today's gospel is to use every opportunity to love and embrace everyone as one family. Today's leaders often misuse their power and authority to dominate the less privileged, the downtrodden, the sick, and those who have no one to speak for them.

Like Jesus, we should focus on God's message and not create unnecessary importance for ourselves. The little authority given to us should not be abused but utilized to win souls for God.

Like the psalmist, "If you hear his voice today, harden not your hearts." We pray for the grace to exercise our authority with love, care for one another, and love God above all things. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

Peace,

Fr. Jingbe Simon