

## Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

I can think back to an incident a number of years ago when I was driving around a roundabout that was unfamiliar to me and my passenger in the passenger seat was offering advice about which lanes I should be in so that I could exit the roundabout at the required junction. As I listened to his advice it seemed wrong, but because he spoke with confidence and certainty I followed his advice nevertheless. I ended up having a collision with another car that was also on that roundabout, fortunately no one was hurt, although I felt silly for listening to the confident voice of my passenger rather than trusting my own sense of the road.

In the Gospel Reading today (Mark 1:21-28) we hear that Jesus' teaching made a deep impression on the people because 'unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority'. What does it mean for Jesus, or anyone, to speak with authority? As my earlier example showed a voice can sound authoritative and yet be wrong.

As the Gospel reading continues we see how Jesus shows his authority, 'he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him'. The authoritative word of Jesus has the desired effect, the unclean spirits flee, and the people are astonished.

Do we ever find ourselves having to speak with authority whether in our families, our workplaces, or even our church community? How do we do this? It is much more than simply having a confident voice. Our words will ring hollow if they are not matched by our actions. If we are asking someone to do something difficult, then we must be prepared to do the same ourselves too.

Being a disciple of Jesus is sometimes difficult, but we have not only the words of Jesus to teach us but also the example of his life. The things that Jesus spoke about came to pass because of the authoritative nature of his word. Moreover that word is handed on to his disciples so that they too can speak with his authority. When St Peter healed the crippled man outside the temple he said 'In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk' (Acts 3:6) and it is in the name of Jesus and with his authority that the Church ministers today.

There are many 'evil spirits' in our world today that need to be called out and destroyed. There are also many voices calling us to act in many different ways. Some of these voices will sound persuasive, but it doesn't necessarily mean that they will be right. As Christians we need to listen carefully for the authoritative voice of Jesus. It won't necessarily be the loudest voice, but deep down we will recognise it as being the most authoritative one. Once we recognise his voice then we too can speak out and act in the name of Jesus Christ and do so with his authority.

For video version please follow: <https://youtu.be/htKz3lDScpl>