

4th (SJ&QA) Sunday in Ordinary Time year B

Myth or fact: Women use about 30,000 words a day while men use only 15,000 words? Fact! It's only because women have to repeat everything! Words can attain wondrous levels of power in many situations: The power to teach, to convince, to move, to change, the power to console and to encourage, to heal and to give life. It also has the power to deceive, to hurt, to harm, and to inflict death.

Occasionally when public figures speak we take their words with a grain of salt. We can't take them seriously because they give the impression that they are insincere and are merely toeing the party line. The fundamental criticism we can make of any person is to say that they are not true to their word. Our Gospel tells us that Jesus spoke, "*As one having an authority.*" Lots of people have authority. Parents, teachers, presidents, ministers, doctors, even brutal dictators have certain authority.

What is authority? *Is it the power to command, to have people under us running where we tell them to? Is it the power we hold over others? Or from the many titles attached to our names?* Jesus captivated the crowds because He taught with authority, and showed genuine leadership. When speaking Jesus does not offer his personal opinion, a studied conclusion, or cite statistics. His words come from reality and truth. People were fascinated and tested to the core of their being by the

words he utters because He speaks from the heart and was fired-up with enthusiasm for the truth.

But what makes Jesus' teaching different from the Scribes? The Scribes usually quote famous rabbis when discussing academic problems. Jesus did not need to begin with, *"thus says the Lord..."* **He is the Lord!** He is not like a mother when her child asks, *why?* She would answer, *"Because, I said so... period."* Jesus knows the very spirit of the law as well as the core of the human heart. He has a fresh approach to problems and to human life itself. In the encounter with the evil spirit Jesus shows the character of his powerful word... *evil is disarmed before his presence.* He heals people of their sickness and drives away demons. With one word he *silences* his opponent and restores the possessed person to his humanity. He reveals the secret of the kingdom and draws people to faith. It is no wonder then that the Scribes and Pharisees attribute his power as coming from the devil.

Our words have power. Speak words that are kind, loving, positive, uplifting, encouraging, and life-giving. The tongue has no bones, but is strong enough to break a heart. So be careful with your words. Think about what a father can do within his family, for his children, by use of his word. Think about the power of the word of those wielding authority in society; the power of kings, presidents, our representatives, church leaders. Think of the influence of mass media, especially of film, TV, radio and internet.

Raise your words, not your voice. It is rain that grows flowers, not thunder. God's word is infinitely more powerful than anything human beings could ever conceive of. **Jesus makes it clear that He is the sole voice of God in the world.** He emphasizes that what he says is the *standard expected of us and the test we must pass if we are to reach heaven.* **Authority** is our conviction within. It is the faith we hold in our hearts, the principle and values we live on, the hope that guides our every action, the love that moves our being, the reason for our living, and the mission of our life. Jesus uses his authority to call forth the best in each one of us and to draw each person towards the Father. The Word of God is spirit and life (John 6:63); it is living and active (Hebrews 4:12). That is why the words of Jesus are so precious—they provide us the answers to proper living.

Why is the church 'Magisterium' so important to our lives? The **'Catechism of the Catholic Church states:** *"The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him (CCC#100)."* The church is our excellent teacher and we have an excellent opportunity to learn. Let us listen carefully to what the church says, understand the lesson thoroughly, learn with diligence and live it fully. St. Thomas Aquinas said, *"The teacher tries to reproduce his own learning in the mind of the student. Then the student knows what the teacher knows."* We are not expected to acquire

the infinite knowledge that Jesus had as God but we can and must know the lessons that he has taught us. **First, so that we may use the truth in our life. Second, that we may communicate the same truth to others.** *Are you living up to Jesus' mission or calling? Ask yourself: Did I become more obedient, simpler, humbler, and more prayerful? There's an inner conversion. The self begins to live in the Spirit. The fruit is evident in that daily life. "The way I live and act... people can recognize what I believe."*

The Word of the Lord will always challenge us to the depth of our being. So if there is anything we need to learn about life, we need to turn to Jesus. In the midst of the troubles and evils of life, let us stay close to Jesus and learn from Him for He is the Holy One of God. When we live holy lives, the voice of the evil in this world will be slowly silenced. Amen!