

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, January 28, 2018

The Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

WITH AUTHORITY!

College students are often given the assignment of writing a thesis. Such an assignment requires them to formulate a thesis statement and then support that statement.

For example, a student might write, "During the past two years electric powered vehicles have not significantly reduced pollution in the state of California."

The student would then have to provide statistics, citations from scientific studies, quotations from respected experts, and a listing of scholarly publications that support that thesis statement.

The thesis would be graded on how well the student proved his or her statement. The student's statement would need confirmation from established authorities. It could not stand on its own.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Mark 1:21-28), the people in the synagogue at Capernaum are astonished at the teaching of Jesus "for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes."

When the scribes taught, they acted like students supporting their thesis statements. The scribes cited noted rabbis, recognized religious authorities, and accepted teachings from the past to validate what they were saying. They made certain to show that their statements were in accord with doctrine and precedent.

Jesus was different. He did not act like the scribes, he taught on his own authority.

Before coming to the synagogue in Capernaum, Jesus had begun his teaching by proclaiming, "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand." We might say this was his thesis statement.

Then in the synagogue he proves the kingdom of God is present as he drives a demon out of a possessed man. Jesus does so simply by his words. "Quiet! Come out of him!"

His words are like the powerful words of God spoken in the Book of Genesis. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." Creation happened when God spoke. Jesus speaks, and things happen. Demons flee, the blind see, the lame walk, and the dead are raised to life.

The authority of Jesus was accepted because his words were seen as having power. As the expelled demon realized, the words of Jesus were the words of "the Holy One of God!"

The words of Jesus continue to have power and authority.

His words are heard as the Gospel is proclaimed and lives are changed.

Words given by Jesus are spoken as water is poured and people are reborn as children of God.

The words of Jesus are spoken over bread and wine and simple food is transformed into the very presence of God.

Unlike the words of a thesis statement or the words of the scribes, the words of Jesus stand on their own. They need no human confirmation. They have divine authority!

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