

Homily January 28, 2018

I am old enough to remember when there were only two television stations in the Seattle area and the news consisted of 30 minutes of national news and 30 minutes of local news - only once per day. With the expansion of media tools has come a dramatic expansion of television designed to inform us about many things. With that expansion came the practice of incorporating experts, or authorities, to help us understand. This can be overwhelming, especially when we hear competing authorities.

In the Gospel today we were reminded that people who observed and listened to Jesus expressed their perception that Jesus distinguished Himself by speaking with authority, as opposed to the scribes and Pharisees who didn't appear quite the same. Authority was found in the message and the method of His delivery. It was affirmed by His power over the forces of evil, the evil of demons or the physical evil of illness or storms.

Jesus spoke for God, thus making Him a prophet. His authentic authority came from His relationship with the Father, being the Son, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, God Himself in human flesh. It is no wonder that people recognized a difference in how Jesus taught. He taught from His divine knowledge and power as the God He was. It was the authority of the truth that only God could express.

Jesus fulfilled the promise for a future prophet that Moses spoke about some 1250 years earlier, as described in our first reading. Jewish history after Moses included many prophets. But Jesus was the One who was the ultimate, perfect and final prophet, speaking God's word with fulness and truth and divine authority.

The role of ultimate, final and perfect prophet was only one of Jesus' roles. He was also the ultimate, final and perfect priest. The priesthood, the offering prayer and sacrifice to mediate and reconcile God and His people, was first exercised by fathers, the patriarchs. Under Moses God established a more institutional priesthood entrusted to one tribe, the tribe of Levi, at the service of the other tribes. With Jesus' sacrifice of Himself on the cross, where He was priest and victim, a new union between God and His people was initiated. Priesthood forever after would be the work of Jesus, the Priest, ministered by ordained priests who work on His behalf. Jesus also was the ultimate king, after a spotty history of earthly kings He initiated the rule that was truly God's through His Church.

Jesus' work continues not just through those who have been ordained to minister on his behalf. All of us, through our baptism, have been initiated into the work of transforming the

world through priestly, prophetic and kingly work. As priests all join the offerings of our life activities to the weekly offering of Jesus on the altar. In doing so we sanctify our work in the world and serve the communion between God and His people. We speak on behalf of God as prophets when we teach by word and example, especially as parents. We help spread the kingdom of God, the reign of Jesus when we seek to make the world around us a place where people are moved to act in accord with the teaching of Jesus, whether they choose to believe in Him personally or not.

In order to do all of this with authority, the authority of Jesus, we must maintain interaction with the ultimate authority who is Jesus Christ. It is interaction that teaches us the truth that Jesus revealed. It is interaction that allows His Holy Spirit to grow and act within us.

The greatest interaction we can have is here at every celebration of the Mass. It is here that Jesus teaches us through the liturgy of the Word. It is here that He makes His death and resurrection present so we can all the more be gifted with the benefits He won for us. And in this context He feeds us with His Body and Blood. We receive the strength to transform the world according to teaching of Jesus.

As you may suspect I am on a campaign this year to enhance everyone's participation in the Mass, and therefore our coming together each Sunday. That's why for Christmas we gave a practical, educational book on the Mass, written in a way that allows digestion one bite at a time. I followed that with a bulletin suggestion about New Year's resolution related to our Mass participation. Last week I announced that we would use another book as the basis of small group Lenten discussion. While the Christmas book is not directly connected to the small group pamphlet, the two can be effective partners. The small group pamphlet has minimal reading and is directed more to reflection and discussion about our experience of the Mass, what we ought to experience and how we might do things to bring that about. The five sessions break the Mass into five sections of the Mass from beginning to end.

"Sign-up" forms were handed out when you came in. I would ask everyone to begin, even during this Mass, to move toward their decision and commitment whether as a group leader or participant. We do want to make a judgment about the number of booklets to purchase. For those who want to know more detail about the contents and approach of the pamphlet the parish website provides more detail as well as the link to a website that allows you to see completely a sample session. The book may be used individually, but there is special power in the

gathering of 2 or more in prayer and the sharing of faith as Jesus promised.

Of course the first step in the full and active participation in Sunday Mass that is envisioned is being here.