

Fr. Rudy's Reflections

The Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 28, 2024

## Jesus in Our Higher Authority

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

As humans, especially in this modern world, we tend to seek a higher authority when we are uncertain in life. We might seek this guidance for a particular purpose or intention, a moral framework, or for answers beyond our understanding. The internet is rife with external sources for those who seek answers, advice in a dilemma, or even to find facts to support a particular world view. If we have a computer or smartphone, all of us, at one time or another, have googled a question that perhaps consulting one's own heart might have been a more effective search engine.

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time, and we are presented with the continuation of the first chapter of Mark's Gospel. This chapter highlights the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus when he preaches for the first time at the synagogue in Capernaum near the Sea of Galilee. In this passage, we begin to understand Jesus's divine authority, which was a challenge to the conventional wisdom promulgated at that time by Jewish scribes and other authority figures. In this scene, Jesus fulfills Moses's words that we find today in the Old Testament reading, as he breaks away from traditional Jewish norms. The crowds who hear these words are astonished by his teaching. In this extraordinary scene, Jesus also rebukes and exorcises a demonic spirit from a man, which demonstrates his power over both the natural and supernatural world.

Jesus stands apart in our own quest for a higher authority. *He is the higher authority*, and even today we may rely on his teachings to live a fuller, more joyful life. He did not wield this power for his sake; he is our Lord and Savior to serve humanity. His teachings offer new insights that extend beyond the traditional ten commandments that are rooted in love and service to others, as well as to God himself. His manner of teaching disrupted the status quo, emphasizing a divine authority that seeks the betterment of humanity. In today's society, often plagued by power struggles and strife, he brings a revolutionary approach to us, inviting us to listen attentively to his words and take them into our hearts. He remains the ultimate source of deliverance for all mankind. And he is whom we should seek in all matters.

And yet Jesus extends his authority beyond sheer obedience to help us better structure our lives, navigate life's challenges, and recover our spiritual and emotional sensibility. In his words we are able to tap into a source of profound transformation of spirit and are able to mend the brokenness within us. If you let his light into your life, his words will resonate within your heart.

*"The holiness of God is like a white light: pure, simple, complete. But when that light shines, as it were, through the prisms of individual human lives, it breaks into an infinite variety of colors. . . each one reveals a unique dimension of the divine holiness."*—Bishop Robert Barron

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Rudy