

14. January 2020

“Divine authority of Jesus”

Mk 1,21-28

They went as far as Capernaum, and at once on the Sabbath he went into the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority. And at once in their synagogue there was a man with an unclean spirit, and he shouted. 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked it saying, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking one another what it all meant, saying, 'Here is a teaching that is new, and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him.' And his reputation at once spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.

Jesus taught and acted in authority! People noticed this and perceived the difference to the preaching of the scribes! It is added in the text that he taught "with divine authority", and so the different ways of preaching are defined even more precisely!

Certainly it is right to point out that in the case of Jesus a divine person passes on the word to men and the difference must therefore be there! But the Lord lets his own share in his authority! He has instructed his disciples to do in his name - and therefore also in his authority - all the works that he too has done on earth (*cf. Mt 10,7-8*)! We know quite a few examples of how this authority transferred to the disciples became effective: through signs and miracles in the name of Jesus!

What does the authority consist of and how does it differ from the "teaching of the scribes"?

It is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the preaching! When Peter preached after the descent of the Holy Spirit, people were moved by his words and many came to faith (*cf. Acts 2,37-38.41*)! The authority became effective because the preaching was completely in accordance with the intentions of the Holy Spirit and aroused amazement and faith in the audience! In cooperation with the Holy Spirit, the power of Jesus became fruitful in the proclamation!

There can also be sermons and speeches by persons who are commissioned for this ministry, but in whom the living presence of the Holy Spirit is hardly noticeable! They preach more from memory, draw on theological knowledge, but lack inspiration. On such a path, the listener's mind may be instructed, but hardly his heart is touched! If it is added that the clear proclamation of the Gospel is weakened by "human ingredients of all kinds", the listeners are hardly stirred up and led to deeper conversion!

The power in which the Lord wants us to participate needs the concrete inspiration of the Holy Spirit to be fruitful!

Another aspect of the Lord's power is His dominion over demons, as in today's text! The Lord has come to destroy the works of the devil (*cf. 1Jn 3,8*), and so the hour of judgment has come for the evil spirits: "*Have you come to destroy us?*" says the demon before the Lord commands him to be silent and cast him out!

The authority of the Lord becomes effective here in the text at the concrete exorcism of the evil spirits from the possessed human being!

The Lord also transfers this authority to his disciples (*cf. Mt 10,1*)! This applies not only to the exorcists specially commissioned by the bishop, but all Christians can participate in this power in their own way.

Here too it is again the Holy Spirit, in whose presence the evil spirits cannot hold on and flee! When the Holy Spirit sinks his bright light into the souls, when the clear teaching of the Church is proclaimed and our prayer gains power through his presence, then there is little room for the demons to work and they must go!

After the three temptations of Jesus in the desert, which the Lord rejected with the Word of God, it is said that the devil departed from him for a while (*cf. Lk 4,13*). If, in the name of the Lord, we reject the temptations that come upon us, we weaken the power of evil and are strengthened even on the spiritual path! In the power of Jesus we are never simply delivered to the powers of evil, but can gain the upper hand in the Lord! However, we are still involved in this struggle until light and darkness are finally separated from the Lord!

The key to the unfolding of the power of Jesus, which he entrusts to his believers, is to be found in the living connection with the Holy Spirit! As we cultivate and deepen this day by day, our words and works will become ever more light and Jesus' power will be stronger through our lives!