



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Father Chris Comerford
January 28, 2018 Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading I Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Psalm 95

Reading II 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

Gospel Mark 1:21-28

Homily

Preaching can be powerful. We hear that from our Scriptures today that the Word of God can be transforming. In the time of Moses people were worried. We hear about that. Moses was getting older and they were worried that there wouldn't be anyone to replace him. They didn't know what to do. So Moses is speaking with God, and God promises him, "I will send a voice who will proclaim the Good News who will be even more powerful than Moses. He will be the ultimate teacher of the faith." We know that God would fulfill this promise by sending his Son, Jesus, who would be the best teacher for us.

And we see when Jesus begins his teaching he does so in Capernaum, a little fishing village on the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee. This is a beautiful town, a wonderful area. I have been there and there are wonderful remains dating back to the time of Jesus. They have ruins of the house that was Peter's home where Jesus would stay when he was in Capernaum; it was their home base. It was there that on one Saturday he goes into the synagogue, for them Saturday was the Sabbath, and in the synagogue someone with training and knowledge of Scripture could get up and comment. You didn't have to be a rabbi. So, Jesus gets up and teaches. This is unlike anything they had experienced. They couldn't believe the power and authority of which he spoke. He was different than anyone else. Often when rabbis would be there to preach, they would quote other rabbis as their source, "This rabbi says this, and that rabbi said that." Jesus was different. He spoke just in the text; he spoke the meaning behind the text. It was powerful. And we see that today. An unclean spirit was there and through his word, the spirit is cast out. Incredible to see that.

Jesus is powerful in the way that he speaks and powerful in his actions. He is unlike anyone else. You are going to get that sense of that right away and hopefully be prepared to listen to him. Some would, and some wouldn't, as often happens today. So we see the importance of Jesus's message. We see that throughout his life here on earth. He offered his teachings to so many. But the wonderful thing is that he continues to teach to those who proclaim his word, and it is amazing what can happen for those who preach and teach. It clearly is not on our own authority. I know that myself. When I

get up here, it is not on my authority that I am able to preach to you. It is through the church and from Christ that I can do so. And it is amazing that can happen.

I always tell people that it is amazing that I am up here at all. When I was young and in grade school, like a lot of our kids today, I was the quietest child in class. I was. I never said anything. I never got into trouble for speaking, and I hated it when the teacher called on me. I never raised my hand. I was the quiet one in the corner. It is amazing that God chose me to proclaim his word, and it clearly is the sign of his power. It clearly is a gift of God as I found out later on as I began to use that voice for Him. When my teachers, particularly in high school, find out that I am a priest they can't believe it, because they did not know my voice, because I barely used it. But it is through the word of God, through his power, that all things are possible. I know that when I get up here and preach. I always have a plan for my homily. I don't get up here cold, sometimes I use notes, but I do prepare for each homily. I have a plan for the way I am going to go and sometimes God takes my homily in a different direction. And sometimes words that come out of my mouth and I am thinking, "Did I say that? Where did that idea come from? It must be from God himself." Often when I am called to give a challenging message to people, the Holy Spirit just takes over. I know other times I have given a homily and afterwards someone will say to me, "Thank you for saying these things in your homily. It was exactly what I needed." Except I didn't say them. It is kind of amazing when that happens. I used to worry about it. I'd think think, "Were they not listening?"

No. They heard the message that they needed to hear. God spoke to them through his word through me in a way they needed to hear. And that is really trusting in the power of God when you hear that. The word of God that came from Jesus is just as powerful today. The teaching of Jesus is just as powerful today.

This week we begin Catholic Schools Week. What a gift we have today as our students are involved in our liturgy and they have a lot of wonderful activities planned for the week. Blessed Sacrament School is an incredible blessing for us. I know it is for me. And our children and faculty and everyone involved. What a blessing it is to offer the teaching of Christ. That is what makes us different; the teaching of Christ is given every day. Incredible when we think about that. And we should celebrate that. The kids will have a lot of fun this week. There will be activities of service and it is a great schedule of things for our children to realize the great gift we have is to be part of our school.

I am so excited when I hear the witness of our families and what it means. I am so thankful for all of your support. We know that to educate our children is a lot more than the tuition we charge. We couldn't keep the school running without your assistance and we are so thankful for that — to make that available for our students.

I know Catholic schools can form us in a wonderful way. I have over 20 years of Catholic education. It took me a long time to get it right, I guess, but all the way from Kindergarten through high school and even seminary and post study from that. It is incredible. I don't know any way that would have been different for me, but my experiences of faith of learning has always been so important. I am thankful that our students can have that opportunity. I love it that we can begin each day in prayer together, and end each day in prayer together. What a gift we have. We will hear a testimony from one of our families at the end of Mass today, and there is so much to be thankful for in our school. So I hope you will continue to show that love and support. The word of God is powerful. It is transforming if we listen and open our ears and open our hearts.

"If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart. If today you hear his voice, harden not your heart." Be open to the way the Lord wants to speak to you, and amazing things can happen. Let's pray for that strength today to always trust in Jesus as our teacher.

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