

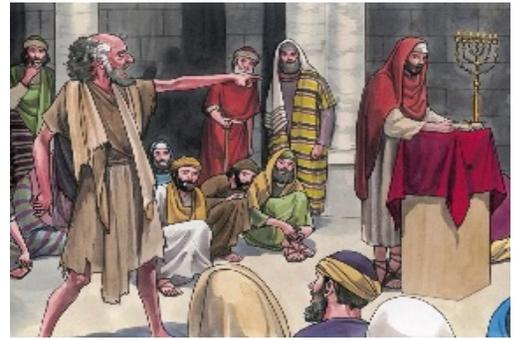
LIVING FAITH

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

JANUARY 30, 2021

THE GOSPEL FOR TODAY

Mark 1:21-28



They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent, and come out of him!' And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, 'What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.' At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

REFLECTING ON THE WORD OF GOD

In this week's Gospel, Mark tells us that the crowds are amazed that Jesus teaches *with authority!* This is in sharp contrast to the scribes who also teach, but have no authority. Clearly having authority makes a substantial difference, but what does having authority mean?

For most of us the word 'authority' conjures up images of people with power enforcing the rule of law such as police officers on the streets, judges in the courts, teachers in the classroom, principals of schools, Archbishops and clergy, or government leaders such as premiers and prime ministers etc. But the scribes also had power, they were the teachers and exercised a certain degree of power, yet they did not have authority. Perhaps Mark is suggesting that there is a difference between power and authority? We can all think of examples of people and institutions with power who have abused it and acted hypocritically. When that happens, we often speak of such people or institutions as have lost their 'moral authority'; in other words, they may still exercise power, but the confidence and trust that people once had in them is gone. Perhaps that is what the people in the synagogue meant when they compared Jesus' teaching to that of the scribes.

Perhaps, as the author Dennis McBride suggests, the people see Jesus teaching as having authority because it yields results. Jesus' words are not simply nice, they change people for the better. They see people heal from illness, they see loved ones, friends and strangers who were once estranged from society be restored once again to the community. They see that Jesus' words make a change for the better. That is highlighted in today's Gospel where Jesus encounters a person with "an unclean spirit", someone who has lost all control and is at the mercy of this 'unclean spirit.' Jesus speaks and the spirit leaves the man. His words yield results for all to see, results that leave the man better than he was. This is how Jesus speaks with authority; he does not just say words, but he follows up with actions that help make a difference for the better. In short, he puts his words into action. Of course, Jesus' word is no ordinary word, it is God's word taken flesh in his own being, a word that creates and restores!

For us today, we are called to follow in Jesus steps. How can we as individual and as institutions strive to become more "authoritative" in the sense that Jesus was? Will we follow up our words with real actions that help make a difference for the better? We are called to strive to use the gift of our words to call and inspire each other to something greater and more in keeping with the Kingdom of God and, to follow up our words with equally meaningful actions.

Jesus in the Synagogue

The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Mark 1:22

Each number represents a letter of the alphabet. Substitute the correct letter for the numbers to reveal the coded words.



R	O	P	U	G	J	E	Z	Q	W	X	F	V	L	K	T	I	D	C	M	A	B	H	N	S	Y
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

1. 25-21-22-22-21-16-23 _____
2. 25-26-24-21-5-2-5-4-7 _____
3. 16-7-21-19-23-17-24-5 _____
4. 21-20-21-8-7-18 _____
5. 25-3-17-1-17-16 _____
6. 25-23-2-2-15 _____
7. 9-4-17-7-16 _____
8. 25-23-1-17-7-15 _____

AMAZED	SYNAGOGUE	SHOOK	SABBATH
SHRIEK	TEACHING	SPIRIT	QUIET

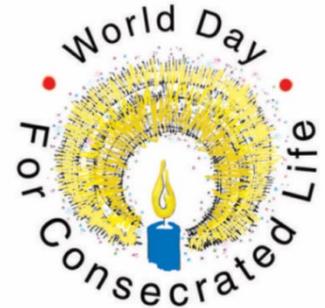


**THIS WEEK WE CELEBRATE
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2
FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD AND
WORLD DAY FOR CONSECRATED LIFE**



Initiated in 1997 by Saint John Paul II, the World Day for Consecrated Life is celebrated annually on February 2nd, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. This Feast is also known as Candlemas Day; the day on which candles are blessed symbolizing Christ who is the light of the world. So too, those in consecrated life are called to reflect the light of Jesus Christ to all peoples. St. John Paul gave as the purpose of this World Day: "to help the entire Church to esteem ever more greatly the witness of those persons who have chosen to follow Christ by means of the practise of the evangelical counsels" as well as "to be a suitable occasion for consecrated persons to renew their commitment and rekindle the fervour which should inspire their offering of themselves to the Lord."

We are grateful to these consecrated men and women of our Archdiocese who live out their baptismal vocation by professing the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience in a religious congregation, a secular institute or through private vows. The World Day for Consecrated Life is a wonderful opportunity for us to show our gratitude to them by praying for God's continued blessing upon them and by praying that many others will hear and respond to the call to Consecrated Life.



"This then is the consecrated life: praise which gives joy to God's people, prophetic vision that reveals what counts. Consecrated life is not about survival, it is not about preparing ourselves for *ars bene moriendi*: this is the temptation of our days, in the face of declining vocations. No, it is not about survival, but new life. "But... there are only a few of us..." – it's about new life. It is a living encounter with the Lord in his people. It is a call to the faithful obedience of daily life and to the unexpected surprises from the Spirit. It is a vision of what we need to embrace in order to experience joy: Jesus" -- Pope Francis, World Day for Consecrated Life Homily, February 2, 2019

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3
ST BLAISE**

SAINTS FUN FACTS by John Sheppard

Raised as a Christian in a rich family, he became a bishop. In a vision, God appeared to him and told him to flee. To avoid persecution, he lived in the hills with sick animals and cared for them.

He was later captured and while imprisoned, cured a boy choking on a fish bone.

He was ordered to be killed for refusing to renounce his faith and love of God.

St. Blaise

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*The Presentation at the Temple
WORLD DAY FOR CONSECRATED LIFE*

Prayer for Consecrated Persons

GOD OUR FATHER, we thank you for calling men and women to serve in your Son's Kingdom as sisters, brothers, religious priests, consecrated virgins, and hermits, as well as members of Secular Institutes. Renew their knowledge and love of you, and send your Holy Spirit to help them respond generously and courageously to your will. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.



SECRETARIAT OF
CLERGY, CONSECRATED LIFE AND VOCATIONS
www.ForYourVocation.org • www.sccbh.org

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POPE FRANCIS PROCLAIMS THE YEAR OF ST. JOSEPH DECEMBER 8, 2020-DECEMBER 8, 2021

In a new Apostolic Letter entitled *Patris corde* ("With a Father's Heart"), Pope Francis describes Saint Joseph as a beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an accepting father; a father who is creatively courageous, a working father, and a father in the shadows. This week, we share the fourth aspect, shining a light on Joseph as an accepting father. Here's what Pope Francis has to say...

Joseph accepted Mary unconditionally. He trusted in the angel's words. "The nobility of Joseph's heart is such that what he learned from the law he made dependent on charity. Today, in our world where psychological, verbal and physical violence towards women is so evident, Joseph appears as the figure of a respectful and sensitive man. Even though he does not understand the bigger picture, he makes a decision to protect Mary's good name, her dignity and her life. In his hesitation about how best to act, God helped him by enlightening his judgment".

Often in life, things happen whose meaning we do not understand. Our first reaction is frequently one of disappointment and rebellion. Joseph set aside his own ideas in order to accept the course of events and, mysterious as they seemed, to embrace them, take responsibility for them and make them part of his own history. Unless we are reconciled with our own history, we will be unable to take a single step forward, for we will always remain hostage to our expectations and the disappointments that follow.

The spiritual path that Joseph traces for us is not one that *explains*, but *accepts*. Only as a result of this acceptance, this reconciliation, can we begin to glimpse a broader history, a deeper meaning. We can almost hear an echo of the impassioned reply of Job to his wife, who had urged him to rebel against the evil he endured: "Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" (*Job* 2:10). Joseph is certainly not passively resigned, but courageously and firmly proactive. In our own lives, acceptance and welcome can be an expression of the Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude. Only the Lord can give us the strength needed to accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations and disappointments.

Jesus' appearance in our midst is a gift from the Father, which makes it possible for each of us to be reconciled to the flesh of our own history, even when we fail to understand it completely. Just as God told Joseph: "Son of David, do not be afraid!" (*Mt* 1:20), so he seems to tell us: "Do not be afraid!" We need to set aside all anger and disappointment, and to embrace the way things are, even when they do not turn out as we wish. Not with mere resignation but with hope and courage. In this way, we become open to a deeper meaning. Our lives can be miraculously reborn if we find the courage to live them in accordance with the Gospel. It does not matter if everything seems to have gone wrong or some things can no longer be fixed. God can make flowers spring up from stony ground. Even if our heart condemns us, "God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything" (*1 Jn* 3:20).

Here, once again, we encounter that Christian realism which rejects nothing that exists. Reality, in its mysterious and irreducible complexity, is the bearer of existential meaning, with all its lights and shadows. Thus, the Apostle Paul can say: "We know that all things work together for good, for those who love God" (*Rom* 8:28). To which Saint Augustine adds, "even that which is called evil (*etiam illud quod malum dicitur*)". In this greater perspective, faith gives meaning to every event, however happy or sad.

Nor should we ever think that believing means finding facile and comforting solutions. The faith Christ taught us is what we see in Saint Joseph. He did not look for shortcuts, but confronted reality with open eyes and accepted personal responsibility for it. Joseph's attitude encourages us to accept and welcome others as they are, without exception, and to show special concern for the weak, for God chooses what is weak (cf. *1 Cor* 1:27). He is the "Father of orphans and protector of widows" (*Ps* 68:6), who commands us to love the stranger in our midst. I like to think that it was from Saint Joseph that Jesus drew inspiration for the parable of the prodigal son and the merciful father (cf. *Lk* 15:11-32).



The window depicting St Joseph with the child Jesus, found in the clerestory level in the Basilica-Cathedral of St John the Baptist, St John's.

This window was crafted in Beauvais, France by Louis Lichtenfeld-Koch in 1891.

