

## 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time: January 31, 2021

St. Vincent De Paul Church, Baltimore

Reflection on the Gospel: *Mark 1:21-28*

In the first part of today's Gospel, Jesus and those he had called to follow him (Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew and James and his brother John) went into the city of Capernaum. On the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and began teaching. Those in attendance were astounded with the words of Jesus.

Mark doesn't provide us with any specifics about what Jesus taught. He tells us about how he communicated. While most teachers spoke based on the authority of the Law or other traditions, Jesus spoke as one who possessed authority within Himself.

I find it important to remember that this was quite early in Jesus' public life. He hadn't yet assembled the twelve. He was apparently known as a Scripture Scholar and had been invited to give the homily. However, no one expected what they heard, the authority with which Jesus spoke.

I recall one of the priests in my childhood parish. He was well loved by everyone and involved with the CYO and youth sports. However, he was a poor homilist. The problem probably wasn't what he had to say, but that he had a very pronounced stutter. On a one-on-one conversation the stutter disappeared. But the stutter was always distracting during the homily. But that was a long, long time ago and I have subsequently experienced exceptional homilists, most notably Fr. Dick Lawrence.

The second part of the Gospel relates the story of Jesus being confronted by a man with an unclean spirit (demon). This demon recognizes Jesus' true identity – *the Holy One of God*. Jesus rebukes him and tells the demon to leave. The demon convulses the man and with a very loud cry leaves the man. All those in the synagogue were amazed and Jesus' fame spread throughout the region.

This is the first time in Mark that a demon publicly challenges Jesus. But *the Holy One of God* has the power over evil. We realize that evil continues to exist in the world. But Jesus can heal our bodies, hearts, minds and souls.

*Joan Fulton*