

4th Sunday of the Year B

*Lord our God, help us to love you
with all our hearts and to love all men
as you love them. (Opening Prayer)*



First Reading

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Moses said to the people: "Your God will raise up for you a prophet like myself, from among yourselves, from your own brothers; to him you must listen. This is what you yourselves asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the Assembly. 'Do not let me hear again' you said 'the voice of the Lord my God, nor look any longer on this great fire, or I shall die'; and the Lord said to me, 'All they have spoken is well said. I will raise up a prophet like yourself for them from their own brothers; I will put my words into his mouth and he shall tell them all I command him. The man who does not listen to my words that he speaks in my name, shall be held answerable to me for it. But the prophet who presumes to say in my name a thing I have not commanded him to say, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'"

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 7:32-35

I would like to see you free from all worry. An unmarried man can devote himself to the Lord's affairs, all he need worry about is pleasing the Lord; but a married man has to bother about the world's affairs and devote himself to pleasing his wife: he is torn two ways. In the same way an unmarried woman, like a young girl, can devote herself to the Lord's affairs; all she need worry about is being holy in body and spirit. The married woman, on the other hand, has to worry about the world's affairs and devote herself to pleasing her husband. I say this only to help you, not to put a halter round your necks, but simply to make sure that everything is as it should be, and that you give your undivided attention to the Lord.

They went as far as Capernaum, and as soon as the sabbath came Jesus went to the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority.

In their synagogue just then there was a man possessed by an unclean spirit, and it 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 said sharply, "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 each other what it all meant. "Here is a teaching that is new" they said "and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him." And his reputation rapidly spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.

Meditation

Jesus spends the sabbath at Capernaum with his first disciples. There he manifests his extraordinary authority as much by his teaching as by healing the possessed and sick. Thus, from the very beginning of his ministry, his fame spreads through Galilee. After Easter this region will become the point of origin for the Church's universal mission.

In today's gospel Jesus goes to the synagogue and teaches there. After the scribe's catechesis on the Law, Jesus no doubt reads a prophetic text and gives the homily as he did at Nazareth. He provokes wonder and astonishment in his hearers. Unlike the scribes, who were anxious to explain the letter of the Law on the basis of commentaries received from their masters, Jesus speaks from his own authority. He confirms that authority when he heals the man with an unclean spirit. That healing gives rise to the question, "Who is this man?"

Many are uneasy with such healing miracles. Medicine and depth psychology seem to reduce to a purely natural pathology what antiquity attributed to the supernatural world. Yet many scientists recognize that there is more to the human than the eye can see. Thus we should not fall into the trap of a new reductionism by having recourse exclusively to the empirical sciences. Like the people in Capernaum, we who live in a technological age must confront the same question, "Who is this man?"