

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
January 28, 2018  
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## Reflection

This past week, the leader of the opposition fell to scandal. Patrick Brown appeared briefly before the media, refuted the charges against him, and almost immediately resigned as his ministers backed away en masse. Normally a story like this would have dominated our thoughts, and not just the news cycle. But when it's windy out on garbage day, our streets get covered with scraps of paper. Didn't it feel like just one more piece of refuse flying from a row of black boxes? The #metoo campaign has scratched the surface of lustful domination and misspent virtue, characterized as insufficient consent. What a false god to kneel before. The abscess has been pricked, and pent up pressure is pushing out the pus. The questions are no longer: whether someone will fall but when; not who it will be, but how many. The ground is shaking more and more below institutions that have been tottering anyway; celebrity and authority is battered and swaying. This week you "sat in darkness," and now I want you to see "a great light."

In today's Gospel, Jesus revealed himself as a teacher and healer with authority over unclean spirits. He brought words of wisdom to the synagogue, and was immediately opposed. "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." So he

Dt 18:15-20  
Ps 95  
1 Cor 7:32-35  
Mk 1:21-28

accompanied his words with a miraculous sign.

He rebuked and cast out the unclean spirit. "Be silent, and come out of him!" Jesus showed that he is the Messiah, the anointed one of God. His signs strengthened belief in those who accepted him. "What is this? A new teaching - with authority!" But they also deepened offence in those who rejected him. The next few chapters in Mark show the mounting division between him and the scribes; each revelation a step towards the cross, each step forward a pace towards victory and glory.

So what does Jesus teach with authority? Words of life that carry joy borne by love. Words entrusted to his apostles, contained by Tradition, recorded in Scripture; with meaning understood ever more deeply by the Church through the grace of the Holy Spirit. "O that today you would listen to his voice!" He speaks through Paul, who seeks to free us from anxiety through "good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord."

Paul tells the Corinthians that married people are anxious about the world and how to please each other. However, unmarried people are anxious about the affairs of the Lord. An unmarried man wonders how to please the Lord. An unmarried woman seeks to be holy in body and spirit. This seems idealistic, but some are invited to follow Christ by living out his virginity. It's possible through the grace we receive in the sacraments. It shows how the bond with

Christ takes precedence over that with family.

It's a sign that married life is a reality of the present age - but "the present form of this world is passing away." The saints live what they find in Scripture. St. Angela Merici founded the Ursulines in Brescia, a teaching order for women. She saw that "disorder in society is the result of disorder in the home," so educated future wives and mothers. St. Marie de l'Incarnation brought the Ursulines to Quebec, and was canonized by Pope Francis. St. Thomas Aquinas served the Lord as a Dominican. His brothers objected to his vocation of poverty, obedience and chastity. They sent a woman of ill-repute into his chambers, and he chased her out with a poker.

Grace comes in different forms.

So we remember that both marriage and virginity come from God. The Holy Spirit gives them meaning and grace, driving out whatever is impure. Jesus esteems marriage and virginity. In his virginity he is the spouse of the Church, giving himself to keep her spotless and free of wrinkle. It's up to us to value them both. In the words of St. John Crysostom: "Whoever denigrates marriage also diminishes the glory of virginity. Whoever praises it makes virginity more admirable and resplendent. What appears good only in comparison with evil would not be truly good. The most excellent good is something even better than what is admitted to be good (St. John Crysostom)." What does that mean? We learned about marriage in third theology.

Until then, I was happy in my choice of vocation.

It seemed better than marriage. But learning what the Church teaches about marriage made it seem pretty good too. It gave me a desire for marriage...so my choice was between two goods...making my priesthood an even better good.

For this Eucharist, we commend ourselves to Mary. We ask her to shield our eyes and hearts from temptations against purity. Let us persevere in chastity and continence within our state in life, receiving the fullness of joy that God intends.