

“The Holy One of God”

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This morning's portion tells us the first miracle of Jesus according to Saint Mark. It is the first sign that he performs after being baptized in the Jordan River and calling the fishermen of the Lake of Galilee to follow him. In this way Jesus begins to bring the Good News to the world and prepare those disciples to continue his legacy.

What is special about the beginning of Jesus' ministry? With clear and simple words, Mark tells us that the authority of Jesus is central to his ministry among us. It is an authority that goes beyond words, beyond the traditionalisms of the religious leaders of his time. It is an authority that breaks patterns and liberates. From the outset, the gospel shows us what that authority will be in the work of Jesus, the Messiah, and what the arrival of the Kingdom of God consists of.

The authority of Jesus is revealed on Shabbat, which is the day of the week that the Jews observed as a day of rest or rest to attend the synagogue. Jesus, like a good Jew, respects the precepts of his religion: in time, since he is observing the Sabbath, and in space, since Mark tells us that he is in the synagogue, the place of worship. However, Jesus attends not as just another listener, but as someone who teaches, with such depth that "The people were amazed at how he taught them, because he did it with full authority." The community recognizes that they are dealing with a man who moves them with his words and awakens their admiration. According to this, Jesus is a qualified teacher whose authority already surpasses the most learned of his time, he teaches differently from the teachers of the law.

And why is it different? because his teaching goes hand in hand with his action; together they are Good News. The realization of the Kingdom is not achieved only with moving words, but through the true transformation of human realities.

As we hear in today's gospel, Jesus confronts the impure spirit that oppresses a man. Jesus goes beyond the words that move his audience to work in man his first miracle: the expulsion of a demon.

At that time - and today - a demon constitutes the presence of evil that tries to prevent the realization of the Kingdom, but Jesus is the authority over that power. With Jesus the Kingdom of God is inaugurated and the demons know it: "Why do you mess with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know you, and I know that you are the Holy One of God." Only the recognition of who Jesus is can come as a result. He is the one who "Teaches in a new way, and with full authority! Even to impure spirits he gives orders, and they obey him!"

Everyone was amazed because Jesus did not teach in the traditional way. This is the prophet promised by God in Deuteronomy: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet". That prophet is Jesus and his authority lies in his teaching and also in his works.

In this time of Epiphany, when we are reminded of the manifestation of Jesus to the people, the Church must also make the effort to know and recognize him, otherwise how will it be able to communicate it to the world! What Epiphany do we need today? For what manifestation of Jesus does the world thirst? What authority does society claim?

A church that focuses on the Word, that meditates on it, internalizes it, shares it, spreads it, is doing it well, and should be proud of it. However, if the step is missing in doing, in acting, in evidencing a little more each day the reality of the Kingdom of God and making it tangible in its context, perhaps you should rethink your understanding of said Epiphany.

Let us remember that Jesus goes from word to action, from exhortation to liberation, and in this we must transform ourselves as a Church. We must be a church that through its works the sad smile, the anguished receive hope, the meaningless find the reason to live, the sick relieve their pain, the forgotten feel loved, those rejected by so many

discriminatory human conditions can feel in home, the displaced can feel welcomed and the oppressed can see justice triumph. All of these are signs of the Kingdom of God and it is what we have been called to as disciples, followers of Jesus.

Our call to follow Christ implies a great social, moral and ethical responsibility, as well as a religious one. With baptism, as Jesus lives it, comes our commitment to the Kingdom, to God and to all of his sacred creation.

Just as Jesus' public ministry began after his baptism, so it must be with God's people. Our baptism is the same call that Jesus gave to those first disciples whom he invited to be fishers of men. There are many realities to transform, many "demons" to expel, many people to free, many realities to change. Our commitment of faith to Jesus and to others is to transform teachings into action, as Jesus himself did.

Brothers and sisters, let us live centered on the divine authority of Jesus and be faithful to that authority revealed in his words, but also in his works.