Tuesday of the First Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 1:21-28): Jesus came to Capernaum with his followers, and on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; 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!" Jesus rebuked him and said, "Quiet! Come out of him!" The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him.

All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

"The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes."

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Today, first Tuesday in Ordinary Time, Saint Mark presents Jesus teaching in the synagogue, and immediately he comments: "The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes" (Mk 1:21). This is quite an extraordinary comment. On one hand, what His listeners admire is certainly not the doctrine but the Master; it is not what is said, but who says it. And, on the other hand, it is not the preacher as such but, rather, specifically who He is: Jesus taught "as one having authority", that is, with legitimate and unimpeachable power. This particularity is further confirmed with a direct contrast: "He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes."

A little later, though, the scene of the man with an evil spirit integrates the doctrinal lesson with an admirable motivation: "What is this? A new teaching with authority" (Mk 1:27). Notwithstanding, we may as well note the description does not refer so much to the contents as it does to its uniqueness: the doctrine is "new". Here we find another reason for this contrast: Jesus communicates something unheard (no other word can better describe it).

We still add a third remark. His authority comes also from the fact Jesus "commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." We are facing here such a deep contrast as with the previous ones: To the Master's authority and to the newness of His doctrine we must add His power against evil spirits.

Brothers! Our faith tells us that this Liturgy of the Word makes us contemporaries of what we have just heard and commented upon. Let us ask ourselves with humble gratitude: Do I fully realize no man has ever spoken the Word of God the Father as Jesus did? Do I feel rich with a message that holds no comparison either? Do I realize what liberating force Jesus and His teachings have in human life and, more specifically, in my life? Touched by the Holy Spirit, let us tell our Redeemer: Jesus-life, Jesus-doctrine, Jesus-victory, please, as the great Raymond Lully liked to say, may we live in a constant "wonder" of You!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Love for God cannot be taught. Knowledge of the love of God does not come from outside. But in the same time when man was composed, a seminal was deposited in us, which possesses from its own the causes of appropriating love." (Saint Basil the Great)

- "The novelty of Jesus is that he brings the Word of God, God's love for each of us. Jesus looks for people's hearts. And he seeks to bring God close to people and people close to God." (Francis)

- "His works and words will manifest him as 'the Holy One of God' (Mk 1:24)." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 438)