Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Gospel text (*Mk* 1:21-28): Then they came to Capernaum, 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.

“What is this? A new teaching with authority”

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Today, Christ addresses us with His forceful cry, without doubts and with authority: “Quiet! Come out of him!” (Mk 1:25). He speaks to the evil spirits that live within us and prevent us from being free, as God has created and desired us to be.

Perhaps you have noticed that the first rule the founders of religious orders set up when establishing community life, is often that of silence: in a house where prayer is needed, silence and contemplation must reign. As the adage goes: "Noise makes no good, good makes no noise." This is why Christ commands that evil spirit to be silent, because its duty is to surrender to the Word, who "became flesh and made His dwelling among us" (John 1:14).

But it is true that with the admiration we feel for the Lord, a sense of sufficiency can also mix in, so much so that we may come to think, as Saint Augustine said in his own confessions: "Lord, give me chastity and continence, but not yet!" The temptation is to postpone our own conversion until later, because it does not fit in with our personal plans at the moment.

The call to the radical following of Jesus Christ is for the here and now, to make His Kingdom a reality in our lives, which struggles to make its way among us. He knows our lukewarmness, knows that we do not decidedly commit ourselves to live according to the Gospel; we want to procrastinate, to get by, to live, without stridency and without a sense of urgency.

Evil cannot coexist with good. Holy life does not allow sin. Jesus Christ says: "No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other." (Matthew 6:24). Let us take refuge in the holy tree of the Cross and let its shadow be cast over our lives; and let Him comfort us, make us understand the purpose of our existence, and grant us a life worthy of being Children of God.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “How great is the power which the lowliness of God has over the pride of devils... ‘He [the devil] cried out, What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?’", etc. For it is evident in these words that there was in them knowledge, but there was not charity.” (Saint Augustine)

- “I always ask you to have daily contact with the Gospel. Read a passage of the Gospel every day. It is the power that changes us, that transforms us: it changes life, it changes the heart.” (Francis)

- “‘The Word of God, which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, is set forth and displays its power in a most wonderful way in the writings of the New Testament’ (Vatican II) which hand on the ultimate truth of God's Revelation. Their central object is Jesus Christ (...) and his Church's beginnings under the Spirit's guidance.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 124)