



Homily 4th Sunday Ordinary Time (B) - 2009

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My sisters and brothers in Christ,

Last week, Jesus announced the kingdom of God is at hand. This week, in mighty words and deeds, He exercises His dominion - asserting royal authority over the ruler of this world, Satan: “A new teaching with authority, they said. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him”.

The passage of the Gospel it’s the beginning of St. Mark’s Gospel. The beginning of Jesus’ public life. After choosing the Apostles, Jesus goes to Capernaum and on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue to preach: “Then they came to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught”.

Jesus teaches with authority because he is the Son of God. St. Mark’s Gospel is the Gospel of the Divinity of Jesus Christ. St. Mark will help us to understand that in Jesus “we must see someone who is full God and fully man” and “if we do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God, we will not be able to understand the Gospel” (Navarre Bible, St. Mark Gospel p. 62).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 454 reminds us that “To be a Christian, one must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”

Jesus is the Prophet foretold by Moses in the 1st reading of today’s Mass: ‘I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kin’. Though He has authority over heaven and earth, He becomes one of our own kinsmen. He comes to rebuke the forces of evil and chaos - not only in the world, but in our lives as St. Paul says in today’s 2nd reading.

So, today we ask for the grace to increase our faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ. As we pray in the Creed every week, ‘I believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God’. It is important because our faith is not about some ‘doctrine’ or ‘human ideal’ or a ‘philosophical theory’. **Our faith is in the person of Jesus Christ.**

So today we are called to renew our faith. As the letter to the Hebrews says: “Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen”. As I wrote in one of my columns for Today’s Catholic, faith is the gift that makes it possible to say “yes” to what God has revealed through Christ and his church — the truths he has revealed for our happiness and salvation.

Pope John Paul II used to tell this story about a friend who was an famous physicist. The man told John Paul that as a scientist, he couldn’t believe in God — because the scientific

method couldn't "prove" the existence of God. But, he added: "Every time I find myself confronted with the beauty of nature, I feel that God exists."

St. Paul said something very similar. "Ever since the creation of the world, (God's) invisible nature ... has been clearly perceived in the things that have been created." (Rom 1:20)

In other words, from the beauty and order of the world around us, our reason can lead us to conclude that there must be a Creator.

But God isn't content with the fact that we know he exists. He wants us to know him personally — to know how much he loves us and to know the deep meaning of our lives as children of God.

Reason alone can't give us that information. For that we need the gift of faith. But if faith is a gift, we have to accept that gift. We have to make an act of faith. We have to say "yes" to what God proposes to us in the Scriptures and in the teachings of the Catholic Church.

That's why St. Paul talks about the "obedience of faith." (Rom 1:5) Faith requires obedience. We're not called to a blind or unreasonable faith. But we do have to trust in God's plan for our lives as it is revealed by Jesus and his church.

That means we should never doubt what the church proposes, and we should never deny those truths through our words and actions. To do that is to sin against God's gift of faith and to risk falling into spiritual blindness.

The act of faith means, too, that we have to always be seeking to know God's will and to be trying to do it.

Faith is hard in our world today. So let's be sure we're nourishing our faith. How do we do that? By reading the Scriptures, by learning more about what the church teaches. In fact, it would be great if every Catholic would spend a few minutes every day reading the Bible or a few questions and answers in the Compendium of the Catechism.

My sisters and brothers, we all know it: our faith grows to the extent that we practice it. The more we try to live our faith, the more we try to share our faith with others, the more deeply we come to believe it and to know its truth and power.

If we really believe in the divinity of Christ, then it will make sense to follow the advice of Moses in the 1st reading and St. Paul in today's 2nd reading, to listen to God and do it without distraction.

Let's ask Mary, Mother of God and our mother, to help us to increase our faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ and open our souls to the grace of God, listening without distraction that our love of God and others will be strong and faithful. Amen.