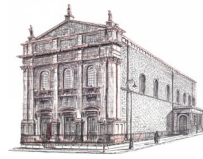




## PARISH OF ST. AGATHA 30TH/31ST JANUARY 2021



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### POPE FRANCIS: JESUS' AUTHORITY TO HEAL

Today's Gospel passage (cf. Mk 1:21-28) tells of a typical day in Jesus' ministry; in particular, it is the Sabbath, a day dedicated to repose and prayer: people went to the synagogue. In the synagogue of Capernaum, Jesus reads and comments on the Scriptures. Those present are attracted by His manner of speaking; their astonishment is great because He demonstrates an authority different to that of the scribes (v. 22). Furthermore, Jesus shows Himself to be powerful also in His deeds. Indeed, a man of the synagogue turns to Him, addressing Him as God's Envoy: He recognises the evil spirit, orders him to leave that man, and so drives him out (vv. 23-26).

### PREACHING AND ACTION

Two characteristic elements of Jesus' work can be seen here: preaching, and the therapeutic action of healing: He preaches and heals. Both of these aspects stand out in the passage of the evangelist Mark, but preaching is emphasised the most; exorcism is presented as a confirmation of His singular "authority" and His teaching. Jesus preaches with His own authority, as someone who possesses a doctrine derived from Himself, and not like the scribes who repeated previous traditions and laws. They repeated words, words, words, only words. Just words. Instead Jesus, His word has authority, Jesus is authoritative. And this touches the heart. Jesus' teaching has the same authority as God who speaks; for with a single command He easily frees the possessed man from the evil one, and heals him. Why? Because his word does what He says. Because He is the definitive prophet.

### THE KINGDOM OF SATAN EXISTS

The second aspect, healing, shows that Christ's preaching is intended to defeat the evil present in humankind and the world. His word is pointedly directed at the kingdom of Satan: it puts him in crisis and makes him recoil, obliging him to leave the world. Touched by the Lord's command, this possessed, obsessed man is freed and transformed into a new person. In addition, Jesus' preaching conforms to a logic contrary to that of the world and of the evil one: His words reveal the upheaval of a mistaken ordering of things. In fact, the demon present in the possessed the man cries out as Jesus approaches: "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?" (v. 24). These expressions indicate the total extraneousness (unrelated views) between Jesus and Satan: they are on completely different planes; there is nothing in common between them; they are the opposite of each other. Jesus, authoritative, who attracts people by his authority, and also the prophet who liberates, the promised prophet who is the Son of God who heals.

### HEAL ME FROM MY SINS

Let us listen to the words of Jesus, which are authoritative: always, do not forget! Carry a small copy of the Gospel in your pocket or in your bag, in order to read it during the day, to listen to that authoritative word of Jesus. And then, we all have our problems, we all have our sins, we all have spiritual malaises (lack of health); ask Jesus: "Jesus, you are the prophet, the Son of God, He who was promised to us to heal us. Heal me!" Ask Jesus for healing, from our sins, from our ills. The Virgin Mary always kept Jesus' words and deeds in her heart, and followed Him with complete availability and faithfulness. May she help us too to listen to Him and follow Him, to experience the signs of His salvation in our lives. (Vatican News).

### SATAN CHALLENGES THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH TODAY

Have you noticed how the unclean spirits that Jesus encounters, all recognise Him and cannot help themselves but shout out His identity and Holy Name. They know Him because it was His Authority over them, when they rebelled against Him in Heaven, that threw them out. Satan and his unclean spirits know that they have a limited time on earth to try and destroy the Church, but they will not succeed, because Jesus will Triumph in the end. In today's Gospel (Mark 1:21-28), an unclean spirit, who had taken possession of a man shouted; *What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.* Because the unclean spirit took ownership of the man, the devil asks Jesus what he wants with them both? The Devil is an unclean spirit and manifests himself in sin.

### ONLY JESUS HAS THE AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE SIN

The unclean spirits once lived in Heaven but became disobedient to God's Word and were thrown out by God. They know Jesus, who is God in the Flesh. They foolishly thought they could take over Heaven, so now they want to take over the Church on earth. To heal a sinful heart full of unclean spirits needs Authority. The Church of Christ on earth is that Authority, who through the Sacramental Presence of Jesus, forgive sins. Jesus said sharply; *Be quiet! Come out of him! And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him.* Only Jesus the Eternal High Priest has the Authority to cast out demons and heal the disease of sin in our hearts and souls. Nobody else can do it without God's Authority. He extends that Authority to His Priests, but we can only do it in His Name - just as in an exorcism. The Devil will take no orders from a mere human but because he and his unclean spirits have no authority over God, they must obey His Voice.

### CHURCH IS THE AUTHORITY OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

The devil's trick is to get us to challenge that Divine Authority, by rejecting it here on earth. Look where that got satan - into hell. The devil's mission is to bring the Church down - in fact to close it altogether. Presently he is working at it today. He always waits in ambush. God expects us to stand and defend our Church. Those gifted with Authority were caught off guard and left the counter-attack too late. The Devil's agents got in first and closed public worship, resulting in starving God's children of the Eucharist. Jesus' Authority is not based on government philosophy. We need to become that voice in the wilderness and pray hard our Masses return. Jesus expects this of us.

### THE BODY OF CHRIST

Jesus wants us to be physically fed **ALWAYS** of Himself in the physical consumption of the Eucharist. We pray in the Our Father; *Give us this day our daily Bread.* Jesus said; *For the Bread of God is that which comes down from Heaven and gives Life to the world.* The people gathered around Him said; *Sir, give us this Bread ALWAYS.* However, while the flock are starved, there is Hope and all is not lost. Like the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), the world needs to *come to its senses* and humbly return to God and repent, by amending our lives, by asking Jesus to drive out all unclean spirits in us and our Church. We need to prioritise our principles. God will allow the virus to mutate if we do not return to Him. Only God can give us New Life. We must become living branches attached to the true Vine (Jesus), in order that we will bear fruit for Eternal Life (Jn 15:1-10). Ask Our Lady and St. Joseph to intercede for us and to bring God back into our lives and families. Jesus is the only Way, the only Truth and the only Life. God bless, Fr. Brendan.