



Bible Study

Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time B

St. Maria Goretti, St.
Augustine and St. Peter Claver
Parishes
January 28, 2018
Volume 2 Issue 10

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.
Mk 1:23-26 NABRE

Reading I: Deuteronomy 18:15-20

HE SAW THE BEST IN ME! A Gospel Song written by Marvin Sapp expresses the depth of God's love for us. "He saw the best in me, When everyone else around, could only see the worst in me,..." The song goes on to say: "He is mine, I am His, it does not matter what I did. He only sees me for who I am." These words give us comfort in the knowledge that we are not condemned for who we are. The comfort comes from the fact that we are often condemned by people and we often condemn others because of their race, gender, or their past transgressions. God did not give us the ability to condemn. We have the authority of God, the Creator to see the best in all His creations.



**A Prophet
Like Me He
will raise...**

Chapters 16-22 of the Book of Deuteronomy describe the various offices of the Theocratic Society that Yahweh established through Moses for the Chosen People. God saw the best in a people who refused to have direct contact with Him for fear of death (Deut. 5:24-28). Selfishly, they preferred for Moses to risk direct contact with Yahweh so that their lives would be spared. Perhaps this is an example of the worst characteristic of the Chosen People. They were also described as stubborn. Yet, Yahweh was faithful to them and allowed them to enter the Promised Land (Deut. 9:6).

To prevent the rise of false prophets (vv. 10-11), Yahweh promised to raise up prophets like Moses from their ranks, who would have His authority. While this passage deals with the prophets who would succeed Moses, it came to be understood as a prophecy foretelling the arrival of Jesus the Christ in the New Testament (Mt 17:5; Jn 6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:22; 7:37). Yahweh saw the best in the Chosen People. DISCUSSION QUESTION: What do you consider to be your worst personal characteristic? Imagine how God sees that personal trait.

AUTHORITY

God's authority is absolute and unconditional (Ps 29:10; Isa 40:1). He has authority over nature (Job 38), governments (Dan 4:17,34-35), and history (Acts 1:7; 17:24-31); and He has the power to send people to hell (Luke 12:5). Jesus Christ has the same intrinsic authority as the Father (John 10:25-30), although this authority is said to be given to Christ from His Father, just as the authority of the Holy Spirit is given to Him from the Father and the Son (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15). Christ has the authority to forgive sins (John 5:26-27), to lay down His life and take it up again (John 10:17-18), and to give eternal life (John 17:2). The people were astonished at this authority which Jesus revealed when He taught and performed miracles (Matt 7:28-29; 8:27; Luke 4:36).

In addition to the intrinsic authority of God, the Bible speaks of many kinds of derived power. Some of the most important of these are the authority of civil governments (Rom 13:1-7), parents (Eph 6:1-4), employers (Eph 6:5-9), church leaders (Heb 13:7,17), angels (Luke 1:19-20), Satan (Luke 4:6), and evil spirits other than Satan (Eph 6:11-12). There are vast differences among these kinds of authority. Some are permitted by God only for a time. (From Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Reading II: 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

HE SAW THE BEST IN ME! St. Paul saw the best in the Corinthian Church. He devoted all of Chapter 7 to answering questions on marriage and virginity. The common belief among these Christians was the second coming of Christ was imminent. Therefore, he helped to develop their best qualities in preparation for the end. He saw the best in them.

St. Paul's advice should be taken in the broader context of Chapter 7. He wants them to be confident in their salvation. Therefore, married people must honor each other (1 Pet 3:7). They are to see the best in each other. Their bodies are not their own (1 Cor. 7:3). Regarding virgins (v. 34), he sees the best in them as he visions Anna (Lk. 2:36-37), who devoted her entire life to worshipping God. St. Paul encourages us to see the best in our state of life and each other. DISCUSSION QUESTION: How can you best honor your station, or stage of life?

Gospel: Mark 1:21-28

HE SAW THE BEST IN ME! The idea of being made in God's image and likeness is awesome. It means that we are truly God's and He is ours. We are like Him. He sees us for who we are. Not the person that the world tells us we should be. The challenge is to become more of who He is, than who we are.

Ann Lamott, in her work, *Traveling Mercies* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999), p. 112, quotes Eugene O'Neil as saying, "Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is glue." His glue, His grace, is the best part of us. We see the best part of each other when we see His glue, and His grace in ourselves and others.

In the Gospel, Jesus saw the best of Capernaum. He went immediately with His companions on the Sabbath to the Synagogue and taught with authority (vv. 21-22). The Gospel of St. Mark stresses Jesus' abrupt entry into His public ministry. It suggests Jesus preached in various towns in Palestine. Every Palestinian town of any size had a synagogue. It was a sacred place where pious Jews gathered to worship on the Sabbath. It is in the synagogue at Capernaum that Jesus sees the best in those present and preaches perhaps one of His first sermons. Perhaps He was invited by the local rabbi to do so, as it was the custom at the time (Acts 13:15). He saw the best in the congregation, as He preached with authority. Unlike the local rabbi, He gave the law as the Messiah, the Son of God. (Mat. 5:21). The phrase *amazement of the people* is a literary device of Mark to describe the state of mind of those who listened to the teachings of Jesus the Christ. Did they see the best in Him?

Jesus saw the best in the man with unclean spirits, or demons (v. 24), who perhaps tried to embarrass Him. Jesus did not want His Messianic Character to be revealed at this time in His ministry. But the demons recognized Him and called Him the Holy One of God (v. 25). The demon saw the best in Him. Jesus looked past the worst part of the man in the Synagogue and saw that he was made in God's image and likeness. With the same authority that He taught the scriptures, He commanded and expelled the spirits from him. He did not condemn the man for his demonic possession. He freed him in the presence of others (Mk 3:11-12). The amazement of those present shows what happens when we look past the faults of others and see their needs. God is glorified and His kingdom is expanded. He saw the best in the people of Capernaum and in us. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** If you were Jesus in this Gospel reading, how would you have reacted? How do you react when verbally assaulted by others?

Pray About It!

Monday

Read Mk. 1:23. Can you see the presence of God in others? How do you react?

Tuesday

Read Lk. 2:36-37. How dedicated are you to the service of God?

Wednesday

Read Mat. 5:32 and 19:3-9. What is God's concept of Marriage? What is yours?

Thursday

Visit or call someone who is shut-in and ill.

Friday

Attend Mass and receive the Eucharist.

IS SATAN REAL?

The Catholic Church Teaches That:

2850 The last petition to our Father is also included in Jesus' prayer: "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one." It touches each of us personally, but it is always "we" who pray, in communion with the whole Church, for the deliverance of the whole human family. The Lord's Prayer continually opens us to the range of God's economy of salvation. Our interdependence in the drama of sin and death is turned into solidarity in the Body of Christ, the "communion of saints."

2851 In this petition, evil is not an abstraction, but refers to a person, Satan, the Evil One, the angel who opposes God. The devil (*dia-bolos*) is the one who "throws himself across" God's plan and his work of salvation accomplished in Christ.

Resources: The Gospel of Mark, The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, Revised Standard Version Second Catholic Edition, Ignatius Press San Francisco CA, 2010; pp 66-68; 1 Corinthians, Catholic Study Bible, Ignatius Press 2010. San Francisco. CA. 2010, pp. 295-296; Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year B, 2015, Bryan Schmisek, Diana Macalinal, and Jay Cormier, Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 47-51; Scripture texts in this work are taken from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-The-Sunday-Readings-Cycle-B>, Kevin O'Sullivan, O.F.M. Franciscan Herald Press 1971, pp 93-100; The Gospel of Mark, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, Mary Healy, Baker Academic, © 2008, pp. 44-47.

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St. Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2014