

- Now we see Jesus in Capernaum this morning...which is actually “Kfar Nahum”, meaning “Nahum’s village”...though no connection to the prophet Nahum of the Bible is known.
- Capernaum is on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, which itself is in the northeastern part of Israel.
- This is an area of Israel with a lot of foreign influence. In fact, some of the next towns over on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee were part of the Decapolis—the Greek-influenced area—and there is speculation that Jesus may have come here because, having many different cultural influences, this area would be more initially open to His teaching.
- But a bigger issue in our Gospel today is Jesus’ ability to drive out unclean spirits, who recognized Him as the Son of God—indicating His divinity.
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- People often dismiss stories like this one of the unclean spirit out-of-hand, and even many Christians will do so...primarily because they’ve never witnessed it, and because there is so much fiction and film about it.
- But the Church affirms the existence of evil spirits, just as it does of angels...not that we should start seeing evil spirits and demons around every corner.
- Evil spirits are simply “anti-angels”—those who rebelled against God, and, like Satan, hate the unconquerable fact that we slimy little humans are given the opportunity to take their places in Heaven.
- But...in a way, skepticism is good (though with scripture misplaced) because there are tricksters and charlatans everywhere... and there always has been.
- So even St. Paul tells us: “*Do not quench the Spirit...but test everything [and] hold fast to what is good...*” (1Th 5:19-21)
- ...but always remembering that infallible guidance is promised not to us as individuals, but to the Church as a whole...and thus we should always check “what says the Church” with interpretations

of scripture and validity of holy things...through the 2000-year-old lens of wisdom she has.

- Because some of the greatest minds in the world have been in the Church...studying, meditating, debating about the things of God... interpreting scripture...and we recall that the New Testament came from the Church, not the Church from scripture.
- Even St. Augustine said: *“I would not believe in the Gospel, had not the authority of the Catholic Church already moved me.”* (CCC 119)
- And then Jesus’ promise—the promise of God—to Peter, the first leader of the Church: *“I tell you, you are Peter [you are rock], and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven... (Mat 16:18-19 RSV)...as well as Jesus’ words to the apostles: “I am with you always, until the close of the age.” (Mat 28:20)*
- And so, when discerning the right from the wrong... recall the letter to the Hebrews: *Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God [in other words, remember what has been taught since the beginning]; consider the outcome of their life [sainthood], and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings. (Heb 13:7-9 RSV)...teachings which diverge from what has been taught from the beginning...things which the Church continues to teach and uphold.*

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- Now we Christians, and we Catholics most of all, are truly a privileged people, having been blessed to know God through Jesus Christ and through His Church.
  - But what is faith without action? As St. James tells us in his letter: *“Faith without works is dead.”*
  - Jesus exhorts us in the Sermon on the Mount: *“You are the light of the world...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see*

*your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*  
(Mat 5:14-16 RSV)

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- Obviously not all of us can go out and long-term and be missionaries.
- But many, if not most, of you have received by now the Annual Catholic Appeal letter from the Archdiocese...and known that all the programs supported by the ACA are meant to help take YOUR light to the world.
- Our donations are essential to support programs like Catholic schoolchildren at St. Therese and Holy Cross and Santo Niño and others...to support adult education programs and ethnic ministries, to help the poor, promote respect life efforts...and most especially to support training of the next generation of priests who are to continue to in the future to bring you and your family the sacraments. What greater investment is there than that?!
- By supporting our portion of the ACA, we as a parish reach beyond our own community to help our Church as a whole...to evangelize those who have yet to come to know Christ, and to bolster the faith of those whose faith needs support.
- And this support is much needed. In fact, last Thursday I was called to attend a meeting in March to discuss cuts in the Archdiocesan budget...which may include cuts in personnel.
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- How much should we pledge? Well...that's something that each of us have to discern...but know that whatever we give to God is not lost to us, but multiplied for us.
- And we in Los Alamos are already so blessed...and more “stuff” does us no good; only richness in grace leads to life.
- Paul reminds us that: *“God loves a cheerful giver”*...and Jesus says in the Gospels: *“Take heed what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you...”* (Mar 4:24-25 RSV)

- You all have been quite generous in the past...and as God has been generous to us, let us continue to be generous to Him in thanks.
- Now our parish goal this year is just under \$100,000—easily within our reach, especially if we all pitch in...a team effort.
- Some can give more; some can only give less. But let us each give some.
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- One of the vital things you support with the ACA is supporting our seminarians to priesthood. Those 40 men now studying for priesthood could not go to seminary without your assistance.
- As I've told you before, the budget is currently \$1.5 million annually to support and educate all of them. And with so many priests nearing retirement, they are desperately needed. So please be generous to the ACA.
- The most efficient way to contribute is to complete the pledge form sent to you by the Archdiocese and return it to them, or visit the Archdiocesan website. But next week we will also provide forms in the pews to fill out if you'd like.
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- Thank you so much for your support of our larger Church community. And I can assure you that our seminarians from last summer—Robert and Nathan...as well as Benjamin, Michael, Anthony, Angelo, Agustín, Christopher, Darrell, Brian and all the rest—thank you as well.
- They have given up homes, careers and dreams of families of their own to serve the people of God...to serve us. Let us not fail them...or the thousands of others who depend on us to help strengthen their faith.
- There's an old Christian saying which goes something like this: *"We lose what we keep, and we get back what we give."*
- For Jesus Himself tells us: *"Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has [given up anything whatever] for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come, eternal life."* (Luke 18:29-30 RSV)

**Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Lectionary: 71**

Reading 1 Dt 18:15-20

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Moses spoke to all the people, saying:

"A prophet like me will the LORD, your God, raise up for you  
from among your own kin;  
to him you shall listen.

This is exactly what you requested of the LORD, your God, at Horeb  
on the day of the assembly, when you said,

'Let us not again hear the voice of the LORD, our God,  
nor see this great fire any more, lest we die.'

And the LORD said to me, "This was well said.

**I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kin,**

and will put my words into his mouth;  
he shall tell them all that I command him.

**Whoever will not listen to my words which he speaks in my name,  
I myself will make him answer for it.**

**But if a prophet presumes to speak in my name  
an oracle that I have not commanded him to speak,  
or speaks in the name of other gods, he shall die."**

Responsorial Psalm Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9

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**R. (8)** If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;  
let us acclaim the rock of our salvation.  
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;  
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

**R.** If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us bow down in worship;  
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.  
For he is our God,  
and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

**R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:  
"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,  
as in the day of Massah in the desert,  
Where your fathers tempted me;  
they tested me though they had seen my works."

**R.** If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Reading 2 1 Cor 7:32-35

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Brothers and sisters:

I should like you to be free of anxieties.

An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord,  
how he may please the Lord.

But a married man is anxious about the things of the world,  
how he may please his wife, and he is divided.

An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord,  
so that she may be holy in both body and spirit.

A married woman, on the other hand,  
is anxious about the things of the world,  
how she may please her husband.

I am telling you this for your own benefit,  
not to impose a restraint upon you,  
but for the sake of propriety  
and adherence to the Lord without distraction.

**Gospel Mk 1:21-28**

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Then they came to Capernaum,  
and on the sabbath Jesus 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.