

## Reflection for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

*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.*

*Mark 1: 21-22*

Today our Gospel reading tells us of Jesus and His Apostles arriving in Capernaum and that Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. All who heard Him were astonished for Jesus did not teach like the scribes, His words had authority. Our reading this Sunday presents us with Jesus and His Apostles going forth and sharing the *Good News*. If we look at what is taking place after our Gospel reading this Sunday in the Gospel of Mark we see that Jesus and His followers are traveling, entering synagogues to teach and Jesus is performing healing miracles. The actions of Jesus in our Gospel reading this Sunday are no different from His actions recorded in the Gospel of Mark after this Sunday's reading.

Our Gospel reading this Sunday, Mark 1:21-28, follows last week's Gospel reading of Mark 1:14-20. Next week on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time our Gospel reading is taken from Mark 1:29-39, and then of the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time the Gospel reading is taken from Mark 1:40-45. After the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, February 14, 2021 we enter into the Lenten Season and the sequential order of the Gospel reading that started on January 24, 2021, comes to a close.

In these four weeks that start with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time and ends with the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, we cover the Gospel of Mark from 1:14 to Mark 1:45. These 31 verses from chapter 1 of the Gospel of Mark cover the call of 4 of His Apostles and the start of His 3 years of ministry in this world concluding with His death and resurrection. All four of these Sundays have a message of God's call in our personal life and our need to be open to Him working in and through us.

As one look at the readings from these 4 Sundays, there is a clear message of Jesus working miracles in the lives of the people that He encounters. But if we walk away from these four Sundays of Ordinary Time with only the message that Jesus Christ came into the world to heal us, we would be missing out on much of the message of Jesus Christ that is shared with us in these 4 Sundays of Ordinary Time. In the Gospel of Mark from 1:14 to 1:45 we are blessed to not only experience Jesus Christ healing physical and spiritual illnesses but we also hear of Jesus inviting others to labor with Him for the salvation of souls.

If we just focus on our Gospel reading this Sunday, Mark 1:21-28 we find a three-fold message: one Jesus the teacher, two Jesus the healer, and three the new covenant. We first see Jesus today enter a synagogue on the Sabbath to teach. Jesus embraces the role of the Scribes of His day that interpreted sacred scriptures for all assembled. We see that His Apostles and followers embrace this example and after Jesus rose from the dead it was common for his followers to share the teachings of Jesus in the synagogue or the Temple. In fact St. Paul when first arrived in a new city or town would go to the local synagogue and share the Good News there before he shared the teaching of Jesus with any other group in that city or town. Next in our Gospel Reading this Sunday we are informed that Jesus came into this world to heal us of those things that are preventing us from fully following Him, be it physical, psychological, or spiritual. We all at times have things in our lives that can become a road block to us fully following Christ as our Lord and Savior. Jesus through the miracles that he performs is here to help us embrace His love and follow Him. Lastly in our Gospel reading this Sunday we read in Mark 1:22; *"the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes."* The crowds found in teachings of Jesus the message of the *New Covenant*, the *Good News*. Jesus' interpretation of sacred scriptures was very different from that of the Scribes for He spoke of what He knew and what was to come, the *New Covenant*, the *Good News*.

In closing the Sundays of Ordinary Time, between the Christmas and Lenten Seasons provide us with a wonderful but short period of time to reflect of Jesus' ministry in the world and our calling as individuals and as a Church to help with His ministry. Just as Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John are called to be fishers of men, so are we by the virtue of our Baptisms we are called to labor in the vineyard of the Lord. The readings that we have in this Season of Ordinary Time reminds us that once we embrace the call to follow Jesus in this world, our work have just begun for now we begin our work of laboring in the vineyard of the Lord.