

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 2021

My beloved brothers and sisters, one of the phenomena we are now dealing with in the Church today, is what we call in Portuguese: *Cabesa Duras*, hard heads! There are those who have so hardened their hearts and their heads, that they believe the blogs and their friends and family, before they believe the Church, its leaders and science. They deny truth because they have already made up their own truth; they even deny the truth found in the Gospel and in the Tradition of the Church. On the other hand, we need to pursue the truth, because right thinking leads to right behavior! Wrongful thinking leads to living a life full of illusions and a life of disobedience. Such was the case among the people of God in the Old Testament reading, and the Gospel for today!

God knows the hearts of His people. He knows how easily we are deceived by the devil and the world and our own egos! He has provided prophets throughout the ages to lead us into the truth that protects us and sets us free. In the first reading, He promised a prophet like Moses, who would come to lead His people into the truth, but more than a prophet. This was the Son of God, Jesus.

In the Gospel of Mark, this is the first story about the mission of Jesus after His proclamation of last week to change our hearts and minds, to repent and to believe the Good News of God, for the Kingdom of God is near at hand! In this scene, Jesus is teaching in the Synagogue at Capernaum. He teaches with *exousia* (ἐξουσία). It means: Divine Power, not authority, although the Divine Power He demonstrates shows His Divine Authority. The word for authority is: *dunamis* δυνάμις, not ἐξουσία. The people in the Synagogue are shaken. He doesn't teach like one of their rabbis, who constantly quote other rabbis; He teaches with His own authority and with Divine Power. They don't know what to make of Him.

In the next scene, Jesus shows them His Divine Authority to teach the *evangglion*, (εὐαγγέλιον), by exercising His Divine Power over a demon possessed man, who is immediately thrown out of the man leaving him in a temporary catatonic state, (this often happens in an Exorcism, even today!). This is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus from last week: change your

hearts and minds, repent, for the Kingdom of God is near at hand! Jesus shows us what He means: He has come to liberate us from the power of the evil one in the world; however, we must be ready to change our hearts and minds and believe, not a gospel of our own making, but the the Gospel that Jesus teaches us and shows us! He is the Truth, the Way and the Life, and that means there is no other! If we choose another, we go our own way, which leads to destruction not to the fullness of life! We no longer trust services we once trusted to tell us the truth; often we bring that same mistrust to the constant teaching of the Church and to the ministers of the Church when they speak and lead rightly in ways we don't like or agree with.

Today, Jesus is calling us to listen with open hearts and open minds. He is calling us to see with new eyes and a new vision the Truth that sets us free. Today, Jesus is calling us to listen and see with renewed attention to His Divine Word, confident that it is the Truth that sets us free, and to not be shy in helping others to hear that Truth, even when it is unpopular or uncomfortable!