

4 Sunday B
Dt. 18:15-20

St. John Paul II
1 Corinthians 7:32-35

2017
Mark 1:21-28

After listening to St. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians today,
I find it refreshing to know that every husband out there is concerned
Only with pleasing his wife and that every wife out there is concerned
With only pleasing her husband.

It is also quite obvious that St. Paul was probably never married
and the women of Tarsus are pretty happy about that.
And while I don't want to focus my remarks today on that passage
from Corinthians, I do think it is important to understand
that some of the pagan influences in Corinth had caused many of the
early Christians to think that it was against Christian law to marry.

Paul made it clear that that was not the case.
Christians are allowed to marry. He just thinks it's better if they don't.
And the reason Paul said that is that he thought Jesus
was coming back really soon, at any moment...
And people should be getting ready for that and nothing else.

But like I said, I don't want to focus on that this weekend.
For I believe that the heart of the three readings today
Is found in this sentence of the Gospel:

"The people were astonished at his teaching for he taught them
as one having authority and not like their own scribes."

St. Mark is quick to point out that Jesus grew in popularity,
That Jesus was well-respected, and that people listened to him,
Not because he was a Rabbi—Rabbis were a dime a dozen;
And not because he was the son of God—that would come later.
They respected him and they listened to him because he spoke with authority.

Authority is an interesting concept.
We give it to our politicians—gripping all the time about how they use it.
We give it to our police officers, our judges, our teachers our parents.
We give authority to our friends, our fellow Christians, and hopefully to God.

But there is a difference I think between authority and respect.

When people abuse authority, they fail to be treated with respect.

A young second lieutenant was walking on base one day
and was just about to buy a coke out of a vending machine,
when he discovered all he had was a five.
And so he flagged down a passing private
and asked him if he had changed for a five.
The private said cheerfully, "Yeah, I think so...Let me take a look."
At that the second lieutenant drew himself up stiffly and said,
"Soldier, that's no way to address an officer.
Now let's try this again. Do you have change for a five?"
At that the private snapped to attention, saluted crisply and said,
"No sir!"

Jesus was treated with respect because he used his authority wisely.
He never lorded it over anyone.
He never used it to tear people down, but always to build people up.
He never said things like, "You'll do it because I said you will."

This weekend, we begin Catholic School's Week.
For over 2 centuries now, Catholic Schools in the US have provided
authority because they have sought to form our young Church
in academics for today and faith for eternity.

We are blessed to have an excellent Catholic School here at St. John Paul II.
I thank all the teachers, staff and parents who make it the great school
that it is.
And I invite all of you to take a tour tomorrow (this) afternoon
at our open house beginning after the 11:15 a.m. Mass.

Today's Gospel invites us to look at how we handle authority given to us.
Do we use it to help someone grow or to hinder growth?
Do we use it to share power or to gain power?
Do we use it to build up or to tear down?

Jesus had authority because of **who** he was;
He earned respect because of **how** he was.
And the same will always be true for us.

At this time, I would like to invite a couple of people,
Mike Waiz and Joan Hurley,
to say a few words about our Capital Campaign, A Future Full of Hope.