

Rev. Randall Hubbard
Deuteronomy 18:15-20
1 Corinthians 7:32-35
Mark 1:21-28

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
January 28-29, 2012

In our gospel, we hear that the crowds that had gathered, hearing Jesus' proclamation, his teaching, they were astounded for he taught with authority. Now authority is one of those things that can oftentimes cause us to bristle a little bit. We at times will balk at authority. And yet, we know that authority must exist to some degree. And we speak of civil authority; we speak of church authority; and we know that those authorities have oversight and responsibility to care for the people that are under their purview. So we are mindful then that sometimes we must submit to that authority, to follow the guidelines, the laws, the rules. And everyone knowing those, it helps make things easier, because people understand that at a red light you stop and not go. Things like that.

Now we also will at times refer to our own personal authority, and that's how we determine what we deem right or wrong, good or bad; and it oftentimes will help us in making the choices that we make – whether good or bad. So we at times will say, “My own personal authority is what is of upmost importance.”

As we hear this about authority, it can again cause us to step back and to pause. But think about this. With authority, we oftentimes pick and choose. Teenagers. I think it is pretty typical of a teenager to question the authority of Mom and Dad. Arguing, arguing, arguing over curfew times, over activities, friends, that sort of thing. And yet, that same teenager will do exactly everything a coach will tell them to do. Get on a plane. The pilot flashes that light “fasten seat belts.” We fasten. We'll get off that plane and we'll get in our car, and we may – or may not – fasten our seat belts, even though the law tells us we must. So we pick and choose.

But what it ultimately comes down to when it comes to authority, it comes to a willingness to submit. And we can only do that with humility, with trust. When we look at the word “authority,” its root word is “author.” Author. An originator. One who begins. And we as a people of faith say of our God that God is the author of life, thereby we give authority to God. And yet sometimes we have to submit to God's want for us. And we can only do that through humility – our willingness to

trust in God's love and God's goodness. For we do believe that God is the author of all life. God is the one who creates us in God's own image. It is God who redeems us so that we may share in God's eternal life. It is God who forgives us our sins. And shows us how we have been restored to our dignity.

Authority is a hard thing at times. And yet sometimes we really do – in humility, in humbleness – have to submit, whether we agree or disagree. Whether we find it easy or difficult. Whether we find it convenient or inconvenient. We have to submit to a higher authority. For us in faith, that higher authority is our God, the author of life, the one who creates us.

In our first reading from Deuteronomy, we hear that God answers the request of the Israelites. They ask that no longer did they want to have direct interactions with God for they feared in doing so it would cause them to die. They asked for an intermediary, prophet. And God said, "All right, I will grant your request. I will speak to you through prophets."

Now when we look at the Old Testament, we know what the response to the prophets was. They oftentimes showed great disdain for the prophet. They didn't like the message. They didn't like what they were hearing. At times they threatened them, and even other times they killed them. They refused to submit to what God was asking of them.

And God's plan for us is for us to know God's love. To know God's love requires of us submission, humility, an openness to what our God offers us.

And so as we come here then a people of faith, we are mindful that we gather to give praise and glory to our God. That it is through the scriptures that we learn about our relationship with God. It is through one another that we further learn how we are in relationship with God. And through the sacraments that we are united in a special way with our God. But it does require of us some humility, some willingness to submit, to trust, to be open to our God, who is truly the author of all life.