

4th Sunday of Ordinary Time - Jan 31, 2021

Sunday's Readings

First Reading

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Moses tells the people that God will raise up for them a new prophet.

Responsorial Psalm

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

A song of praise to the Lord.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 7:32-35

Paul expresses his concern that those who are married are more likely to face the distractions of earthly life than those who are celibate.

Gospel Reading

Mark 1:21-28

Jesus heals a man with an unclean spirit and his fame spreads throughout Galilee.



Background on the Gospel Reading

Today's Gospel continues our reading from Mark and describes what some believe was likely to have been a typical day in Jesus' ministry. Jesus and the disciples that chose to follow him in last week's Gospel arrive at Capernaum, a small village on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus teaches in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Mark reports that the people respond to Jesus' teaching with astonishment, noting Jesus' authority and contrasting it with the scribes'. Early in Mark's Gospel we already find evidence of the tension that will manifest itself fully in Jerusalem.

After Jesus' preaching, an even more astonishing thing happens. A man possessed with an unclean spirit calls out to Jesus. As we see in this example and

throughout Mark's Gospel, the spirits and demons seem to know Jesus and are often fearful of him. In fact, they seem to understand Jesus' identity better than his disciples. As we will read again and again in Mark's Gospel, Jesus orders the spirit to be quiet and drives the unclean spirit out of the man. Jesus' ability to heal those possessed by demons is an indication of his power over evil.

In the prescientific age of Jesus' time, all illnesses were understood to be manifestations of evil and sinfulness. Our modern understanding of illness is very different. Possession by unclean spirits may have been a way to describe what we might call mental illness today. It may have even been a way of describing certain kinds of physical conditions. There is evidence that there were many kinds of exorcists and healers in first-century Palestine. Jesus appears to be like these healers, but he heals with unique authority and connects his healing activities with the words of his preaching.

We are missing the point that Mark is trying to make in this Gospel, however, if we try to explain away the healing work of Jesus. The crowds see in Jesus' cure of the possessed man further affirmation of his authority. Jesus' power to heal gives greater credence to his teaching. Jesus impresses the crowds through his words, which are manifested with power in his deeds. Mark's Gospel tells us that because of the authority with which he healed, Jesus' fame spread throughout all of Galilee.

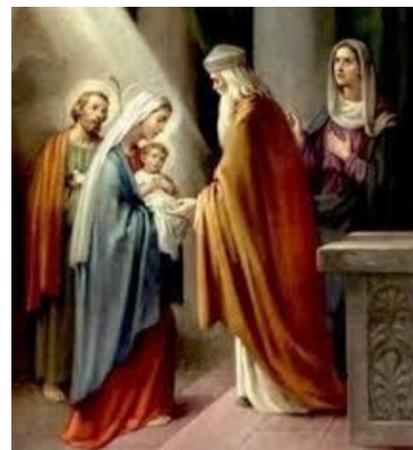
The people who heard Jesus teach and saw him heal in today's Gospel were said to have been astonished and amazed by the authority of his teaching. So compelling were Jesus' words and actions that the news about him could not be contained; it spread quickly throughout all of Galilee. Two thousand years later, the news about Jesus continues to spread. We are called to participate in sharing the Good News of Jesus with others in our words and in our deeds.

What did the people who saw and heard Jesus find so amazing? (In Jesus, the people heard and saw the power and authority of God at work.) People should see in our lives the power and authority of God at work. Can you name any modern examples of people in whom you have seen the power and authority of God at work? Conclude in prayer together that we will experience wonder at the work of God in our world today.

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Liturgical Calendar

Feb 2- Presentation of the Lord



Feb 3- St. Blaise and St. Ansgar

St. Blaise has long been associated with the blessing of throats.

St. Ansgar is the patron of Denmark, Germany, and Iceland. He is known for his charity and sanctity.

Feb 5- St. Agatha

St. Agatha is a patron of miners, alpine guides, nurses and breast cancer patients.

Feb 6- St. Paul Miki & Companions

St. Paul Miki and the 25 others were killed for their faith in Nagasaki, Japan. They were canonized in 1862.

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**The life of the body is the soul;
the life of the soul is God.**

-St. Anthony of Padua

If you try to live in the presence of God for one year, you will see yourself at the end of it at the height of perfection, without your even knowing it.

- St. Teresa of Avila

O my God, let me remember with gratitude, and confess to you your mercies toward me.

- St. Augustine

Give me an army saying the Rosary and I will conquer the world.

-Blessed Pope Pius IX

Let us pray for each other that our Lord may give us the grace that we need to become saint.

-St. Bernadette

Joseph, our Solace in Suffering

Compassionate Joseph, one with us in our human condition, together with Mary and Jesus you experience exile, hunger and violence. Refusing vengeance, you choose mercy. Your forgiveness breaks the circle of violence. Through your goodness, God's hope for our humanity is preserved. Joy is yours, for the Kingdom of God is your inheritance.

Open our compassionate hands in times of war, famine and exile.

Keep us from developing a victim's mentality, and make our pain a source of growth.

Sustain us in fulfilling our responsibility of cultivating inner peace, joy and serenity.

In your wisdom, counsel us to close all doors to bitterness, so that, watched over by God, we may dance for joy. Amen.

<https://www.saint-joseph.org>

God is a spring of living water which flows unceasingly into the hearts of those who pray.

-St. Louis Grignion de Montfort livingwithchrist.ca

Spiritual Communion:

My Jesus, I believe that You are in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I long for you in my soul. since I cannot now receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though You have already come, I embrace You and unite myself entirely to You; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.



LETTER FROM BISHOP OF HAMILTON

FOR THE COMMON GOOD *On the Pandemic Sacrifices*

My dear friends,

The decision to close our churches and suspend public celebrations of the Mass has been a painful one for our clergy, religious, and all the lay faithful in the Diocese. While the sadness of our inability to gather to celebrate the Eucharist is profound, some of the responses to this closure - in addition to falling short of the demands of charity - betray a fundamental lack of understanding not only of why this great sacrifice is being made, but also whose example we follow in so doing.

We know that Holy Communion is the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ, the source and summit of the Christian life. His death is the ultimate sacrifice of love for us – to which we are joined when we participate in the Mass and receive Communion. When we eat His Body and drink His Blood, we say that “we become what we eat”, the Body of Christ.

During these pandemic days we are uniting ourselves closely to Christ by making serious sacrifice for the health and well-being of others. This is not a matter of weakness. In fact, during these days of sacrifice, we live selflessly, as we profess – much as Jesus Christ urges us to live – for the common good. By definition, sacrifice is never easy – and during these days and weeks and months of sacrifice we come closer to Him – we are more like Him – because our sacrifice emulates His! Our children are learning a very important lesson during these difficult days: sometimes we have to give up our freedoms, privileges and pleasures in order care for others – so they might live!

Over the past 22 years, I have been blessed to have served three Dioceses as Bishop: the Diocese of Labrador City-Schefferville, St. George’s Diocese, (the boundaries of which were extended prior to being renamed the Diocese of Corner Brook and Labrador,) and the Diocese of Hamilton. In the first two Dioceses there were remote communities of Catholic faithful who rarely had the opportunity to celebrate Mass, because there were few Priests. The people longed for Holy Communion and gathered and rejoiced when a Priest visited and celebrated Mass with them so they were able to receive the Body of the Lord. This experience of a long wait between Masses will continue for them into an unknown future.

The fact that they cannot receive Holy Communion, however, does not stop them from praying and nurturing a relationship of love with the Lord: the Rosary is still a staple for prayer, reading the Sacred Scriptures prescribed for the day or for the coming Sunday, sharing reflections

and praying with neighbours, saying familiar prayers with family and friends. The faithful in these communities will continue to make this sacrifice for months and years to come. In contrast, in Southern Ontario, where we are privileged to have many parishes and priests to serve them, our pandemic sacrifice will last for a few more months, or for as long as it takes to curb the high numbers of citizens – our brothers and sisters – who contract the dreaded virus.

Since the Ontario Government declared a lockdown in the Province of Ontario effective December 26, 2020, the decision was made, once again, to close our Parish churches in the Diocese of Hamilton. While the current government and public health regulations permit gatherings of no more than ten people for worship (including funerals and scheduled weddings), we are asked to limit all gatherings outside of our homes in order to limit the spread of COVID in the community. In compliance with government and public health directives and out of an abundance of charity, gatherings for Masses in our churches, with the exception of funerals and weddings (up to ten people), even in small numbers are suspended for the period of the lockdown.

The decision to close our churches has not been taken lightly and in no way should it be understood as undermining the central place which the celebration of the Eucharist and the other Sacraments hold for us as Catholics. Our need to gather to give thanks to God remains “our duty and our salvation”; our need for true nourishment, which the Eucharist alone provides, continues. Now, however, we unite ourselves spiritually with our priests who are celebrating

Mass daily and we rely on the infinite fruits of the Mass to sustain us.

We continue to pray for one another, for those who are suffering in any way during this pandemic and for those who have died. Let us pray with confidence in God’s mercy, that the promise of an effective vaccine will be realized and we will soon be able to return to gather again in our churches to give God thanks, to worship with the sacred assembly, and to be nourished with the Body and Blood of the Lord.

Sincerely in Christ and Mary Immaculate,

+Douglas Crosby, OMI

(Most Rev.) Douglas Crosby, OMI
Bishop of Hamilton

January 18, 2021

**The more I follow him without fear,
the more he will protect me.
The more I do his will,
the more he will prove his love for me.**

– St Marguerite Bourgeoys

**To one who has faith,
no explanation is necessary.
To one without faith,
no explanation is possible.**

-St. Thomas Aquinas

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly Hosts, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.