

## Authority in Word and Deed

**Intro.** We have known people who confuse authority with power over others. We have also met people who exude a sense of authority even before they speak or act. Some religious, civil and military leaders have it. They have it without needing to dominate. They inspire others not only to listen to them but also to follow. In his very first teaching, the Lord's authority was not only in his presence but also in his words and deeds.

**I.** After calling his first disciples, the Lord took them to the synagogue. He prayed, listened to scripture and joined in the usual discussion. All who were there were impressed. But most of all, the Lord impressed an unclean spirit which sensed his authority and power and quickly named it: "the Holy One of God." The terms "unclean spirit" or

"demon" refer to evil that wreaks spiritual or physical havoc on human beings. Sometimes in scripture there was no way to determine an evil spirit from mental or physical illness. Throughout his ministry the Lord faced down evil in its many forms. I wonder why it came to a holy place. Was the man a regular at synagogue who hoped to be healed; or did the spirit hope to disrupt the service [Mary Healy, *The Gospel of Mark*, Baker Publishing, 2008, p. 46]? Whichever, the authority of the Lord drove out the evil spirit. By his teaching the Lord established an authority clearly different from the scribes and Pharisees. In banishing an evil spirit, he backed up his words with a powerful deed. That word went ahead of him to other towns. Word of mouth was the social media of its time. Like word of mouth, social media today has enormous potential:

for good news or destructive gossip. *We must* know for ourselves the authority of our sources when we speak or post.

**Concl.** Some of us don't believe we have much power. Not true. During these difficult times, we have seen people use the power of an impromptu music concert in the driveway of their homes or from balconies in large cities to bring joy, healing and companionship to others. Others quickly join in. From our isolation hearts are fired up, plugged into an invisible power source: hope. Our deacon-to-be, Rich, has organized another food drive on February 20, in our parking lot. The food bank got a grant to expand; Wynema says the ribbon-cutting is March 1. The Clay County soup kitchens are preparing to open again. Contact me and I will put you in touch with Brian. This is the power of people. We have

been given power in the form of gifts and talents.  
How we use it or waste it is our choice. Authority and power used to control results in fear, anger and despair. Authority and power used to serve leads to joy, peace and hope. St. Paul and the Corinthians thought the Lord would return soon. He encouraged them, married or unmarried, to stop trying to control everything in life. Rather to focus on the Lord and be ready for whenever he returned. We too are feeling  
**anxious about many things. The Scriptures**  
**“remind us of the importance of having good teachers whose authority is trustworthy” [J. Waters, America, 1/21]. True authority and leadership is clear in the service of others.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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