



# Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)  
January 28, 2024

## Teaching with Authority

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Who teaches with authority? To whose voice should we listen? The first reading provides an answer. Moses had been appointed by God to be God’s voice for the Israelites—for that is what a prophet is. Moses assures the people that God will raise up a leader like himself. They are to listen to that voice just as they listened to his voice. The Gospel presents Jesus as the fulfillment of that promise.

The issues of contemporary life are extraordinarily complex. Actually, when one is in the midst of living, it is always complex. It was complex at the time of Moses and at the time of Jesus as well.

So, to whose voice should disciples listen? It is easy to answer: “The one with authority.” But who has authority? Recognizing genuine authority is not as easy as it sounds. Moses’ position of authority was eventually recognized, but that was not the case in the beginning. The expression, “Who died and left you boss?” comes right out of an earlier story of Moses (Exodus 2:14). As for Jesus, he never held a recognized position of authority in his society, and we know his authority seems eventually to have been rejected by most.

A sign of genuine authority is seen in the integrity of one’s life. Moses led the people through the struggles of the wilderness. In this Gospel, Jesus confirms the message of his teaching with his works of healing. Who has authority? “By their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:16). †

*A sign of genuine authority  
is seen in the integrity  
of one’s life.*



## Sunday Readings

### Deuteronomy 18:15–20

If a prophet presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded, or speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.

### 1 Corinthians 7:32–35

I should like you to be free of anxieties.

### Mark 1:21–28

Jesus...said, “Quiet! Come out of him!”...He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.

## A Word from Pope Francis

It is easy to be at peace with those we love and with those who do good towards us, but it is not easy to be at peace with those who have wronged us... Let us ask the Lord, in silence, for the grace to give everyone, good and bad, the gift of peace.

“REGINA COELI” PRISON, ROME,  
MARCH 29, 2018



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What is your attitude toward authority in the Church, in civil society?
- Do you exercise authority with patience and compassion?

# Healing Our Inner Pharisee

Valerie Schultz

The phrase “healing your inner child” is a pop-psychology mainstay. The idea is that we can only become well-adjusted adults if we have made peace with the issues of our childhood. It is a sensible idea, and one I’d like to borrow to confront another character who dwells within all of us: our inner Pharisee.

The Pharisees were appalled that Jesus did not observe the fine points of the law. And Jesus had little patience with the superficial behavior of the Pharisees, who had perhaps forgotten the true purpose of the laws they so scrupulously upheld. “He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart” (Mark 3:1). Yet most of us have a Pharisee lurking in our psyche.

My inner Pharisee plagues me. When I was a child, my mother called me her “little Pharisee,” because I came home from school with stories of the wrongdoing of the other kids—things that I, of



course, never did. It’s easy to be a little Pharisee when you are the perennial teacher’s pet.

When I was a church employee, my inner Pharisee was especially well-nourished. When someone asked the time of an activity, I would answer warmly but think, “Well, if you’d read your bulletin, you would know, wouldn’t

you?” When a parent complained that she could not convince her child to attend confirmation class, I would nod sympathetically but think, “Well, maybe if you showed up for Mass, your kid would come to class.” My inner Pharisee grew out of control.

Fortunately, God made me a parent, which humbles and humanizes me, and makes me aware of how far from holiness I am. My inner Pharisee is silenced whenever one of my daughters does something that makes me look bad. Parenting is one antidote to the inner Pharisee, as it makes us more compassionate and less judgmental, especially of those who share with us the struggles and joys of parenting.

Certainly laws matter; there are specific laws to which we Catholics are bound. But when obeying the law supplants faith and compassion, we have succumbed to our inner Pharisee. And our inner Pharisee, if not confronted and healed, merely “talks the talk,” while Jesus calls us to walk his walk. †

From *Liguorian*, March 2006

## Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From “The Four Faces of Jesus” by Veronica Smith

Mark, the earliest evangelist, wrote between the years 65 and 70, shortly after Nero’s persecution of Christians. Possibly because of the loss of leaders such as Peter and Paul, Mark deemed it necessary to produce a written record of Jesus. Christianity’s rapid spread also suggests the need for an organized account of Jesus’ life. Mark’s Jesus is in a hurry. Mark introduces you to a Jesus you may not have met before—earthy, relatable, and approachable. In Mark, we meet the most human Jesus. †

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*Holy God, grant us the grace to recognize the truth when it is spoken and live that truth in our daily lives. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

The Redemptorists

## WEEKDAY READINGS

January 29—February 3

**Monday, Weekday:**  
2 Sm 15:13–14, 30; 16:5–13 / Mk 5:1–20


**Tuesday, Weekday:**  
2 Sm 18:9–10, 14b, 24–25a, 30—19:3  
Mk 5:21–43

**Wednesday, St. John Bosco:**  
2 Sm 24:2, 9–17 / Mk 6:1–6

**Thursday, Weekday:**  
1 Kgs 2:1–4, 10–12 / Mk 6:7–13

**Friday, Presentation of the Lord:**  
Mal 3:1–4 / Heb 2:14–18 /  
Lk 2:22–40 or 2:22–32

**Saturday, Weekday:**  
1 Kgs 3:4–13 / Mk 6:30–34

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