

Proclamation of the Gospel

The Lord be with you.
And with your Spirit.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to St. Mark.

In the city of Capernaum, Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and He began to teach. The people were spellbound by His teaching because He taught with authority and not like the scribes. There appeared in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit that shrieked, "What you want with us Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the holy one of God. And Jesus rebuked him sharply, "Be quiet and come out of the man," He said. And at that the unclean spirit convulsed the man violently and with a loud shriek came out of him. All who looked on were amazed and they began to ask one another, "What does this mean, a completely new teaching in the spirit of authority? He gives orders to unclean spirits and they obey him. And from that point on, His reputation spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily by Fr. Gerry Hurley

What an interesting Gospel, right?
Pardon? Yes!
Yeah. What's interesting about it?
Pardon? The demon.

Ah, man the demon is a good one to deal with. Can you imagine it happening here? I mean being in the presence of Jesus and He comes in, walks into the assembly and that and you have that drama unfold. There'd be a lot of folks heading for the exits, we wouldn't wait until after Communion, right? That would be. Because that's our natural kind of response to some of the phenomena. Imagine if people stayed what they might learn from it all, from the experience. It's not a moving away or running away. It's in being able to hang there and see what else.

It's very dramatic, really. Here we have Saint Mark. It's like an introduction to his Gospel. And if you start reading through the opening of the Gospel, you think okay let me move on to the next book. You know, first of all we have the call of the disciples which we saw last week. And then he plunges straight into Jesus' healing ministry right away. This week, next week, and the following week before we begin Lent. Moving in around the synagogue, around the people, church people celebrating, being active. So very interesting. What was particularly interesting to the people was: a completely new teaching in a spirit of authority. What an interesting thought.

The relationship between both of those realities. What went wrong? What happened? A completely new teaching in the spirit of authority. That's the most authoritative teaching in the world. Sad. But, pretty profound.

I want to thank you all for coming to our introduction last week, our laying out our plan and our vision for the future. We anticipated maybe about 25% of our people would come, you know, statistically that's

what they say in the country. In our country, you know, we don't have very high ideals, really. We don't. We don't expect a great deal and we traditionally don't get a great deal, to be honest. And we anticipate about 25%, and we were pretty close to it. Hopefully we will do a lot better than that, and hopefully in a church and in a parish community we would reach far beyond that. That we us we wouldn't settle for statistics. Statistically, people say — well 20% of the people do 80% of the work, and 80% of the people do 20%. It's that traditional thing that is held as a model in business and everything else. It is. It's broadly held. You can look it up. Statistically, that is usually in organizations and systems. Wouldn't that be drastic if we really accepted that as a truth? And yet, as you look at going through the course of the year, there are great truths revealed in that reality.

Why is that? Is it just because that's what we expect? Look it up. It's a standard in business operation. A standard that moves across environments for communities and business and all sorts of things. I want to invite you to consider, "Do I know the mission of my Church? And do I want to know the mission of my Church?"

I'm going to throw the ball back in your court. We had nearly 25% I'm sure there's lots more people that are really interested in knowing and understanding the mission. So I'll throw the ball back in your court. Please call us during the course of the week, if you'd like to know and have the opportunity to have the full presentation — why we exist; what we are about; what our mission is; and what our commitment is. Call us. Let us know. You tell us what time you would like to meet, and we will have a group of people meet with you — whether it's evening, an evening during the week, or Saturday morning or Saturday afternoon, or Sunday morning or Sunday afternoon. I think we can do better. I mean, I'm pretty certain. If I didn't, why would you do it? Why would you do it?

So, thank you. And thank you to those of you that called and actually let us know you couldn't be there but you certainly were interested. That's very very helpful. Thank you.

The Church often described as a hospital — — oh no! Did you forget? — The Church, often described as a hospital, contains too many patients who fail to get well. The Church, often described as a school contains too many pupils who fail to learn. Is this the Church's witness to the world, sick and ignorant disciples who know not the Christ whom they claim as Lord? Wow!

Thank you, Kelly, for your marvelous reflection this week on the front of the bulletin. If you haven't seen it, it's a treasured to behold, particularly regarding that. As we reflect on that, and we will reflect on it for a number of weeks — The Church often described as a hospital contains too many patients who fail to get well. — Think of this, keep it here in your mind. We have a tendency to see only what we are told to see. We have a tendency to hear only only what we are told to hear. Hold that there, and I'll check with you and see if you remember, as we move along.

It's a pretty important piece. You know it's true early on. Teachers says, "Now, I want you all to look here, only at this." And we have many examples. As we grow along, how do you see with different eyes? How do you see differently?

Three or four years ago, when we worked on all of these words and we had a word for the month, we challenged and invited you to be reflective about a specific word. I had talked about in that context, I think it was four years ago, I talked about the parable of Jesus as a teaching tool, and how valuable the parable is as a teaching tool. That instead of ridiculing people or being so directive and saying, hey you're not doing what you're supposed to do, Angela. Or, your not doing what you're supposed to do. Jesus would say, "Let me tell you this parable." And then invite people to look at themselves and say, "Uh oh. Busted! Yeah, your talking to me."

One lady came to me after Mass, and she said, "I really got what you're saying." She said, "I think the parable is really great. I think in Jesus' ministry it's really great." And she said, "You know, I was thinking

during Mass, what I'm going to do is I'm going to talk to my husband in parables." She was absolutely — no, it wasn't entertainment or anything — she was absolutely and totally true blue on it. And she said, "You know, because I think maybe I kind of challenge him too much or whatever, you know, so I'm going to speak to him in parables from here on." And I thought, "What a brilliant idea, Peggy." I said. I told the story at her funeral, you know. Her family knew it and were aware of it. But, what a genuine truth. Peggy Hamilton said I think I'll talk to him in parables. So I checked it out with her, like a month or six weeks later. I said how's it going with the parables, Peggy? And she said, "Well, you know, I'm having difficulty coming up with the parables. But, I'm still thinking." And I said, "Keep it rockin along, because if you get to it, I think we could use it as a tool and an instrument, and we could make it available to everybody else. It'd be pretty cool."

But, it made me think about the parable again this week as a tool. And I was reminded of the letter I read you from my friend two weeks ago, and he said, "In church you should be telling people anecdotal stories and things that they can relate to, and then they could assess themselves." I had little anxiety because Jesus did that, and then I was thinking, um. Ya know, you gotta be careful how all of this works out. But, I said okay well I'll come up with a parable.

Here's my parable: Norma. She was invited to be a new member of this financial consulting staff, and they were delighted to welcome her on board. And so on Monday morning, she arrives to take up her position, this new position. And, so the CEO calls all of the people out of their cubicles. There in a big large space, something like this, in their cubicles one after another they all come on out to the edge of their cubicles. And he says to them, "Good morning. We want to welcome Norma to our staff, our very friendly staff. Please give Norma a very hearty welcome, and make her feel at home. Here at Murphy, Blarney and Bull BS we are a full client services financial system. Our clients are our own number one asset. For 40 years we have been growing our clients savings every year, without exception. Our model is, 'A fat cat is a happy cat.' Now please, all of you introduce yourselves to Norma, and please make her feel welcome."

So, each of them comes from outside of their cubicle. They greet Norma, "Hi my name is Teresa. Welcome." "Hi my name is Patrick. You're welcome, Norma." "My name is Marion. You're welcome, Norma." The last person to come along on the line, she was pretty quiet and she slowly came up to Norman and she said, "I'm glad you're here. Welcome," and duly moved back to her cubicle. Her name was Bridget. Bridget Mary O'Leary. And she quietly sauntered back to her station, and then Norma went to her station, and her supervisor followed her back into her station. And, she said, "Norma you are very welcome. I hope you will be as happy here as I have been for these past 30 years in this great environment." She said, "I'm just down the corridor if you should need anything, don't hesitate to call on me." She said, "Lunch begins and most people gather for lunch in the cafeteria. We go from 12 to 1. I'll see you there." and proceeded back to her office.

Came to lunchtime and Norma comes to the cafeteria, and she gets her lunch, and she sees two of the ladies at the table. And she duly decides to sit with both of these ladies. She looks around the cafeteria and she notices, she had taken note that Bridget was pretty shy and pretty quiet, and she wondered about her. And, so she duly asks her two partners at the table, "where is Bridget?" "Oh. Bridget doesn't come and eat with us." "Oh. Is there a reason?" "Well, well it's a little complicated, you know. She's different." "There's something going on in her life," the second one said. "Oh. What would that be?" Norma asked. "Well, I don't know. But, I'm in the cubicle next to her and I hear her crying sometimes. One day I asked her, 'What's wrong? Are you okay?' and she snapped at me and said, 'I'm fine.' She doesn't come to lunch." And then two more people duly joined. Patrick was one of them. They announced "We are sharing with Norma. We're telling her about Bridget." Patrick says, "Oh, Bridget. You probably don't want to fool with her. Somebody said that they asked her a question one day about a financial concern and she nearly ate their head off." Norma said, "Do you know who that person was?" "No. Somebody. Somebody said."

Welcome Norma, to our firm. Our goal is people. Norma wondered, is that really our goal?

People? Is that our ministry? There's my parable. Thank you.

Now, I would like you to think — how would you finish the parable? What are the possibilities for Norma to be healthy in her new work environment? And if Norma comes to you, and consults with you, what kind of direction do you give to her? How does Norma proceed? Is it possible for her to have a wonderful, healthy experience in our Murphy, Blarney, Bull environment? Is it possible? How would you help her? How would you guide her?

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