

4th Sunday of the Year B January 29, 2012 – Fr. Gerald Haemmerle

From the very beginning of Mark's Gospel, he wants us to know who Jesus was. He introduced his gospel with the words "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Within a few verses we hear the testimony of John the Baptist that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. A few verses later, as Jesus came out of the water at his baptism, a voice from heaven said, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." In today's gospel Jesus goes to the synagogue in Capernaum and taught, and the people were astonished at his teaching, but it was the unclean spirit, the devil, in a man who acknowledges Jesus, and he said "I know who you are --- the Holy One of God." Interestingly, for the next 15 chapters of the gospel, the disciples and the people try to figure out who Jesus was, and they fail miserably. Half way through gospel Peter takes a shot at who Jesus was, saying "you are the Messiah." But then he blows it by rebuking our Lord for talking about the cross. The next man to get it right was the centurion, who on Calvary said "truly this man was the Son of God."

How about us? Do we know who Jesus was? Have we gotten to know him? That is what it means to be a Catholic, a Christian. That is why we have catechisms. That is why we read the bible, why we come to church and pray. And that is why we have Catholic schools. This coming week is Catholic schools week. We have an open house this Sunday afternoon, we will be showing off our new pre-school classroom. There is a Spaghetti dinner from 3:00 to 6:00. It is open to everyone. There will be a special all school mass this Tuesday morning. On Friday our eighth grade boys team will take on the seminarians from the Athenaeum, including our own Brian Phelps.

Our school is a very good academic institutions, our students do very well. Yes, we have very good discipline in our school. We have a fine staff, involved parents, and great students. But the main reason we have a Catholic school is help the students come to know who Jesus was and is. That is the essential reason for having a Catholic school, everything else is a bonus. And we know that Catholic schools can only support and help parents, who are the primary teachers of the children in the ways of faith. We can help, but only parents can really pass the faith on. Are you passing on the faith to your children?

Not everyone chooses Catholic schools. The same points I made about Catholic schools apply to our religious education program. We have good leadership and fine teachers, but they only assist parents in your work of passing on the faith to their children. How important it is that we come to church together, that we pray together, that we come to know the Lord more fully.

To return to the gospel, when Jesus told the evil spirit to come out of the man, he was convulsed, he was disturbed, and then he was cured. When we meet the Lord, when we get to know Him, we might not be convulsed, but we might be disturbed, we should be changed. We can't be the same. Our priorities, or values must become those of Jesus. That is our challenge. That is why we have a Catholic Church. That is why we have a Catholic school and a religious education program.

We did receive a letter from Archbishop Schnurr this week in regard to some serious issues in the health care mandate from the government. It came too late to go into the bulletin this week, but it will be in the bulletin next week, and it is on our web site now. We are asked to pray and fast for wisdom and for justice in these serious matters, and we are asked to be informed on these matters.