

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday B

January 29, 2012

Cathedral

5:00 and 10:00

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**“All were amazed (with Jesus) and asked one another,  
‘What is this? A new teaching with authority.’”**

So St. Mark’s Gospel speaks of Jesus.

It is St. Mark’s Gospel which has Jesus called “Teacher” more often than the other three Gospels. And, in the course of his teaching in the gospel, we come not so much to learn *about* Jesus—that is, information about him, doctrines and rules. First and foremost, as Jesus teaches with authority, we come to know *him*—who Jesus is in *our* life.

This past summer I presided at the funeral of a 90-year-old man whom I had gotten to know well. When he went into hospice care, one day during a visit with him and his wife, I asked him what was it in his life that made his Catholic faith such an anchor of who he was. He answered me immediately: “Father Val, I went to school at IC. During those years I experienced how important my faith is. From there, it has stayed with me the rest of my life.”

This week, throughout our nation, we’re celebrating “Catholic Schools Week.” It recognizes academics, faith, and service in our schools. We also celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Catholic School here at IC. From the beginning days of this parish until now, it is the calling of our school to have Jesus still teach with authority—just as he did in that synagogue on that Sabbath day in St. Mark’s Gospel. Seventy-five years ago a young boy experienced Jesus teaching him at IC School, and it set the course of his life. I witness Jesus still teaching with authority at IC School—and in other venues as well.

You see, sisters and brothers, we all want to meet Jesus, so that he might teach *us* with authority.

How else does Jesus teach us? In a recent book entitled, Sticky Faith, research shows that a genuine faith lived by most young people is rooted in the beliefs and choices that they see lived out in their own homes. If children and teenagers see

their parents praying, it's more probable that they will pray. If they see their parents weaving a living faith into the joys and challenges of daily life, it's more likely that their faith will "stick" (1).

We really don't want to talk *about* Jesus. We want him to teach us with authority! We want him to drive out the demons in our lives and make us free. We're still in the beginning of St. Mark's Gospel. In this first chapter, St. Mark paints the picture of a "Day in the Ministry of Jesus." We hear about that day this Sunday and the next two Sundays. The day begins with Jesus teaching, and also healing. It then speaks about him praying and breaking rules to show that, in fact, the Kingdom of God is so close to us, almost within our grasp.

Sisters and brothers: In this first chapter St. Mark gives us one day in the ministry of Jesus. For twenty centuries, however, Jesus is still teaching, still driving out the Evil One in our lives, still praying for us, still calling us to serve others in his name. For twenty centuries, our faith is "sticky"—that is, it has stuck with us—because we've not only heard about Jesus. He is close to us.

Jesus still teaches with authority. By grace, may we—children, teenagers, adults—truly come to know him. By grace, may we know him, love him and follow him.

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(1) See Terry Mattingly, "Faith that 'sticks,'" in The Commercial Appeal (January 21, 2012), pg. M4. This article speaks about the book Sticky Faith, by Dr. Kara F. Powell and Dr. Chap Clark.