

**Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis**  
**Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Jan. 30-31, 2021, Cycle "B"**

This Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time marks the end of the first month of the New Year 2021. Yet, the times we are living in are hardly ordinary. Still immersed in a global pandemic, separated from one another by mask and social distancing, we take to heart the comforting words we hear from St. Paul in our second scripture reading: **I should like you to be free of anxieties.** We yearn more than ever for God to relieve us from the anxious times we are living in; our endurance so sorely tested by the struggles of living with the coronavirus and its devastating effects. So many people infected, so many people having died. People all over the globe are trying to move forward in a changed world that is grief-stricken and tear-stained due to so much suffering, death, and economic insecurity.

So, we do take comfort in the Apostle Paul's desire to relieve us from our anxieties, and we hear God promise us hope and relief from anxieties through Moses when he encourages the ancient Israelites not to be anxious because he (Moses) cannot enter the promise land with them. They are standing on the banks of the Jordan, and Moses knows it has come time for him to die. He has accomplished the task that God has called him forth for. The people are anxious, worried, and frightened for their future. Moses assures them that God will not abandon them. He says: **A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from among your own kin; to him you shall listen.** They are to listen to this new Prophet because he, like Moses, will speak for God. We Christians see God's promise as perfectly fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus was raised up from among people and He speaks and acts with authority.

The Gospel writer of Mark, then, presents Jesus as the one who fulfills the promise God made through Moses to raise up a new prophet who will reveal God's love and instill hope in a suffering world. When the people hear Jesus speak, they sense that his words are empowered by God. Mark tells us: **The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority.** Jesus speaks with such authority that even the evil spirits listen and obey. Verbally, Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit possessing an unfortunate man: **Quiet! Come out of him!** And, we are told, the unclean spirit convulsed the man and came out of him with a loud cry.

Last Sunday, Mark told us Jesus began his ministry preaching: "The Kingdom of God is at hand," and Jesus calls us to follow him – as He did with Peter, Andrew, James, and John – to help him in bringing about the Kingdom of God. This weekend, Mark shows us that Jesus wastes no time in establishing God's Kingdom. Immediately upon confronting evil, Jesus vanquishes the evil. Our sins, our evil, the coronavirus, are no match against the One who speaks with authority from God. Amazed, Jesus' contemporaries exclaim: "What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him!" With Jesus, the one who speaks with authority, the Kingdom of God begins to unfold before us. His very words and actions dispel evil!

We need to heed Moses, then, and listen to this Jesus who speaks with authority! Even more, we need to heed the call of Jesus to follow him, so that through us, as Jesus' disciples, Jesus may continue to teach with authority, vanquishing evil and building up the Kingdom of God.