

JANUARY 13, 2026 FATHER FRANCIS SALASIOR

A teacher once asked her class, “Who can tell me what authority means?” A little boy eagerly raised his hand and said, “Authority is when my dad tells everyone in the house what to do.” Smiling, the teacher continued, “And what does *real* authority mean?” Without missing a beat, the boy replied, “That’s when my mom tells *my dad* what to do!”

We all laughed—because we all understand the difference between someone who *claims* to have authority and someone who *actually* has it. And that very difference is what the people of Capernaum encountered when Jesus walked into their synagogue. They had heard teachers before, plenty of them. But something about Jesus was unlike anything they had ever experienced—deeper, clearer, and infinitely more compelling. It was not borrowed authority, not secondhand wisdom, not human opinion. This was real authority, and it left them astonished.

The scribes taught by quoting traditions, experts, and earlier teachers. Their authority was inherited or delegated. But Jesus did not teach that way. He didn’t appeal to precedent or footnote other rabbis. He didn’t begin with, “Rabbi so-and-so once taught...” Instead, He spoke from His own divine identity. His words came from truth itself. This authority was not loud or forceful; it was calm, steady, and unmistakable. When truth speaks, something inside us resonates. And when Jesus opened His mouth in that synagogue, the people didn’t merely hear Him—they were awokened.

This is why the unclean spirit cried out, “I know who you are, the Holy One of God!” Evil instantly recognizes real authority. Darkness cannot pretend when confronted by light. The unclean spirit may attempt to disrupt the moment, but Jesus silences it with a single command: “Be quiet! Come out of him!” The same voice that spoke creation into being now addresses one tormented man—and creation obeys immediately.

Notice also that His authority does not crush; it liberates. It does not dominate; it restores. It does not oppress; it heals. Jesus exercises authority not to display power, but to reestablish the dignity and freedom of those who have been wounded or enslaved.

But talk, as they say, is cheap. Anyone can *claim* authority. So, Mark immediately shows us the evidence. A man stands in the synagogue possessed by an unclean spirit, his humanity overshadowed and fragmented. This spirit represents everything Jesus came to oppose: chaos, disintegration, and the slow destruction of a soul. And the moment Jesus enters, the evil spirit recognizes Him immediately: **“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?”** This is the most accurate confession about Jesus so far in the Gospel, and it doesn’t come from a disciple or a religious leader—it comes from a demon. It knows exactly who stands before it.

But Jesus does not debate. He does not perform rituals. He simply commands—with the same authority He used in teaching—**“Be silent, and come out of him!”**

And just like that, the man is freed.

Now the crowd’s amazement reaches its peak. They were already astonished at His teaching, but witnessing His authority in action completely overwhelmed them. They begin asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority!”

But what about us, two thousand years later? The people of Capernaum teach us something vital: faith should always contain wonder. Whenever we hear the Gospel proclaimed, receive the Eucharist, witness forgiveness, or experience grace, something within us should stir and whisper, “What is this? Truly, God is among us.”

When amazement disappears, faith becomes routine. We are the ones who have heard Jesus’ teachings since childhood, who recite the Creed, who know

the stories, and who belong to His Church. And because of that familiarity, we run the risk of reducing Jesus to a set of ideas, a moral code, or a theological concept. We can speak about His authority without ever letting His authority shape our lives.

Today's Gospel pulls us out of that comfort. It reveals a Jesus who is real, challenging, and disruptive—the One whose authority demands a response. The same authority that commanded the demon in Capernaum is present here, in this liturgy, in His Word, and in the gathered Body of Christ.

And His authority is still directed toward the “unclean spirits” in our own lives. Not dramatic cinematic possessions, but the quiet, corrosive forces that fragment our spirits: resentment, fear, addiction, pride, secret sin, bitterness, despair. These forces disintegrate our relationship with God and with one another. Jesus comes with authority not to condemn us but to free us from whatever diminishes our dignity.

So dear brothers and sisters, in the synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus spoke, and amazement filled the room. The same Jesus speaks to us every day of our lives. Let us listen with open hearts, recognize His authority with gratitude, and allow His power to heal, free, and transform us.