

4 Sunday B

January 31, 2019

St. Patrick

“The people were astonished at Jesus’ teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.” —Words just proclaimed, taken from the first chapter of St. Mark’s Gospel.

This past election was a slugfest. But it’s not the first time.

Back in 1954, Governor Christian Herter was campaigning hard for re-election in Massachusetts. One night he arrived late at a campaign barbeque. Because of his non-stop schedule he had not eaten a bite that day. As he moved down the serving line, he held out his plate and one piece of chicken was placed on it.

Governor Herter said to the serving lady, “Excuse me, do you mind if I get another piece of chicken? I’m very hungry. I haven’t eaten all day.”

The woman answered, “Sorry, I’m only supposed to give one piece to each person.”

He said it again, “But I’m starving,” and again she replied, “Only one to a customer.”

Apparently Herter was a comparatively modest politician, but he decided this was the time to use the weight of his office. He said, “*Madam, do you know who I am? I am the governor.*”

And she shot back, “*Do you know who I am? I’m the lady in charge of chicken. Now move along, mister*”(1).

It all comes down to who has authority.

Today we hear, **“Jesus taught as one having authority and not as the scribes.”**

Mark’s Gospel constantly tells us that Jesus “taught.” But what he said, we’re not sure. Oddly, St. Mark’s Gospel doesn’t tell us.

St. Patrick's: Jesus claimed authority by what he *did*, not by what he *said*. In today's Gospel Jesus healed a man with an unclean spirit, and he did that on a Sabbath. You're not to do stuff like that on the Sabbath. Again and again, in St. Mark's Gospel, Jesus shrugs aside rules that suffocate and kill the spirit.

It's said of St. Francis of Assisi that he put it like this, ***“Teach the Gospel at all times—and, if necessary, use words.”***

It falls on every one of us, Friends, to *teach* the Gospel. And we do it primarily, like Jesus, by what we *do*, not by what we *say*. Our children get more of our creed, our faith, by how we live and act, than by what we say.

“Jesus taught as one having authority,” so St. Mark's Gospel tells us this Sunday. In our culture which separates us by divisions and by labels, we can show that we're Jesus' true disciples by how we bring together and show the value in each person. ***“Teach the Gospel at all times—and, if necessary, use words.”*** That's *his* authority. That's *our* challenge.

(1) As recounted by Rev. Billy D. Strayhorn, “All Right, Who's in Charge here?” Sermon given on February 2, 2003 www.deaconsil.com.

General Intercessions
4th Sunday in Ordinary Time *January 31, 2021*

**Form us as vibrant disciples, with Jesus teaching us with authority;
we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Remove the demons of fear, division, and racism from within us and
our nation; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Give us the eyes of faith so that we may recognize Christ in one
another and, especially, in those seen as without value;
we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Unite the human family in ways that celebrate differences in
ethnicity, gender, culture, language, and sexual orientation;
we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Give healing to the sick, especially those with the coronavirus;
give protection to those who receive the vaccine; give support to all
in the medical calling; and, give us all care in protecting others from
the virus; we pray to you, O Lord—**