



FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28–FEBRUARY 3 (if before Transfiguration)

LECTIONARY 4

FIRST READING: Deuteronomy 18:15-20

A reading from Deuteronomy.

〔Moses said:〕

¹⁵The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet.

¹⁶This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said:

“If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die.”

¹⁷Then the LORD replied to me:

“They are right in what they have said.

¹⁸I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command.

¹⁹Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable.

²⁰But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die.”

The word of the Lord.

or

Word of God, word of life.

PSALMODY: Psalm 111

FIRST READING *Deuteronomy = dew-ter-ON-uh-mee Horeb = HOR-eb*

The tone of this reading is ominous. The voice of God—heard directly, as at Horeb, or indirectly, as in the mouth of Moses and the prophets—will always be a frightening proposition. This text “sets up” the appointed gospel, in which the demons recognize in Jesus’ voice the voice of God.

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

A reading from First Corinthians.

¹Now concerning food sacrificed to idols:
we know that “all of us possess knowledge.”

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

²Anyone who claims to know something
does not yet have the necessary knowledge;

³but anyone who loves God is known by him.

⁴Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols,
we know that “no idol in the world really exists,”
and that “there is no God but one.”

⁵Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—
as in fact there are many gods and many lords—

⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father,
from whom are all things and for whom we exist,

and one Lord, Jesus Christ,
through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

⁷It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge.

Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now,
they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol;
and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

⁸“Food will not bring us close to God.”

We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.

⁹But take care that this liberty of yours
does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.

¹⁰For if others see you, who possess knowledge,
eating in the temple of an idol,
might they not, since their conscience is weak,
be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols?

¹¹So by your knowledge
those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed.

¹²But when you thus sin against members of your family,
and wound their conscience when it is weak,
you sin against Christ.

¹³Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat,
so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

The word of the Lord.

or

Word of God, word of life.

SECOND READING

This continuation of apostolic caution to a conflicted community is the poster child for practicing—repeatedly, out loud—in preparation for reading to the assembly. Take adequate time to chart the logic of the writer’s argument before beginning to practice the reading. It is essential to know where a sentence is headed before beginning to read it. Help the hearer sense the quotation marks around the various sayings (apparently well known to the writer’s audience), with modest additional emphasis and a brief pause following each. To be read well this text demands a significant investment on the part of the reader.

GOSPEL: Mark 1:21-28

The holy gospel according to Mark.

²¹Jesus and his disciples went to Capernaum;
and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught.

²²They were astounded at his teaching,
for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit,

²⁴and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?

Have you come to destroy us?

I know who you are, the Holy One of God.”

²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!”

²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice,
came out of him.

²⁷They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another,

“What is this? A new teaching—with authority!

He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”

²⁸At once his fame began to spread
throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL *Capernaum = kuh-PER-nih-um synagogue = SIN-uh-gog*

Two rather benign sentences provide a kind of calm before the storm in which Jesus confronts an unclean spirit. The volatility of the situation is apparent in the spirit's departure, “convulsing him and crying with a loud voice.” Determine well in advance precisely how animated the reading ought to be. Allow verse 28 to stand alone as a description of the significance of the event.