

4th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Ps 95:1-2,6-9
1 Corinthians 7:32-35
Mark 1:21-28

Monday February 1

Hebrews 11:32-40
Ps 31:20-24
Mark 5:1-20

Tuesday February 2 Presentation of the Lord

Malachi 3:1-4
Ps 24:7-10
Hebrews 2:14-18
Luke 2:22-40

Wednesday February 3

Hebrews 12:4-7,11-15
Ps 103:1-2,13-14,17-18a
Mark 6:1-6

Thursday February 4

Hebrews 12:18-19,21-24
Ps 48:2-4,9-11
Mark 6:7-13

Friday February 5 St. Agatha

Hebrews 13:1-8
Ps 27:1,3,5,8b-9
Mark 6:14-29

Saturday February 6 Sts. Paul Miki & co.

Hebrews 13:15-17,20-21
Ps 23:1-6
Mark 6:30-34

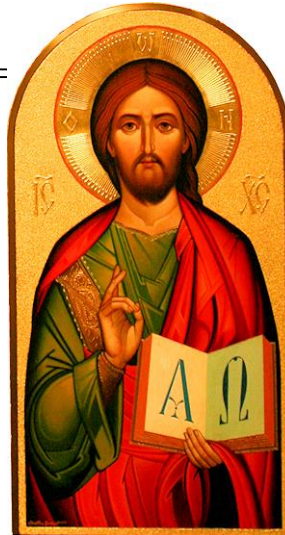
This Sunday's Gospel reading illustrates the authority of Jesus. If we truly accept and understand his authority over our lives, we can rejoice in the Lord even when life hands us hardships.

Why? Because we know that Christ's authority is supreme, which means that everything we've placed under his authority will produce good fruits. Even bad situations will be transformed into blessings. Tragedies will be changed into triumphs. Sorrows will be transfigured into joy. Frustrations will lay the groundwork for new growth, new knowledge, and a greater ability to minister to others.

However, if we reject Christ's authority by acting as if we're the ones in charge, deciding for ourselves how to end a problem or how and when to escape from a hardship, our problems will only get worse. This is called "moral relativism." Pope Francis wrote in his Apostolic Exhortation on the Gospel of Joy (*Evangelii*

Gaudium, paragraph 64) that this leads to a feeling of disorientation instead of joy.

The path to joy has been forged by the footsteps of Jesus. To benefit from his authority over evil and over human sufferings, we have to follow his example and obey his teachings. This means choosing to trust him, realizing that his ways are the best ways even when



they're unpleasant ways. It means that we're willing to reach resurrection glory by going through the cross with Jesus.

There are no successful shortcuts to the triumphant victory that awaits us. There is no easy way to overcome evil. If this were not true, Jesus wouldn't have needed to die on a cross.

The good news – the reason why we can rejoice – is that the most loving, most powerful, most wise One in the universe is using his supreme authority on our behalf. The question is: Will we submit to it?

Reflect & Discuss:

1. In what ways are you still rejecting Christ's authority by trying to do things your own way? Which Church teachings have you been rejecting because you've decided to live by your own rules?
2. Are you willing to ask the Holy Spirit to change your mind on these matters and teach you the value of Christ's ways?
3. In what ways do Christians often reject Christ's authority in favor of defining their own rules? Why?
4. What are the apparent risks to living completely under Christ's strict authority?
5. How can we replace these risks with a sense of safety?