

## Homily Year 4 B - January 28, 2018

In 1977, along with two others, I traveled in a self-contained camper to Nova Scotia. The goal was two-fold: visit Nova Scotia and search for my family's roots especially in a small town called Cheticamp. One night, we were in the camper in a provincial campground. The security officer came knocking at the door. He wanted to check out who the "Aucoin" was from New York State. I was a person of interest, not because of crime, thankfully, but because he was interested in genealogy and his name was also Aucoin as were about half the people living in Cheticamp.

To answer his curiosity about my roots, I had to enumerate my roots. Je suis Robert, fils de Clarence, fils de Guillaume, fils de Moise, fils de ... . My legitimacy in the Aucoin tree depended on whom I could claim in the past.

We see this research back into the past among many others, especially among ethnic groups.

The same thing occurs in the gospel. Jewish religious leaders would claim their authority to teach by going back in time enumerating who taught them, who taught the teachers, who taught the teachers' teachers, tracing all the way back to Moses. Without that link to the past especially Moses, the teacher would not be esteemed and would not be considered authentic.

In describing Jesus, Mark points out that Jesus "taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes" and "a new teaching with authority." In other words, other teachers, other leaders had authority to speak and to act because it was delegated to them. Jesus has authority because he is who he is. Jesus fulfills what God promised to Moses: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kin, and will put my words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him."

This authority of Jesus stands in direct opposition, as we heard in the gospel, to the evil, unclean spirits. When we read these stories in the gospels about unclean spirits, we may visualize that latest creepy movie we've watched. But unclean spirits continue in our midst even today. They do not resemble the creepy kind who can morph a frog into a prince or vice versa or who can transform persons such as in the Jumanji Movie. The unclean spirits of today don't make us convulse as we read about in the gospel.

The today's unclean spirits take on a much different shape, and we have given names to them. Pornography, drug addiction, consumerism,

graft, abortion, spousal abuse, human trafficking, euthanasia, new age spirituality replacing God-centered spirituality, true community worship of God being replaced by leisure and whatever seems to be most fun, a culture of death replacing true reverence for life. These are just some of the evil spirits roaming through us today. In fact, today's evils are up-to-date manifestations of the seven capital sins: lust, greed, envy, sloth, gluttony, anger, and the root of so many other evils pride. These are real human sins. They are not just abstract realities.

In the gospel, Jesus confronted the unclean spirit in the man in front of him. The man convulsed as the unclean spirit left him, perhaps not unlike the tremors affecting the alcoholic who is attempting sobriety. Jesus did not run away from the unclean spirit. Rather, he had the authority to take on the unclean spirit.

So, too, ourselves, just as I can claim my Aucoinism by tracing my roots, just as the academic can proudly trace his formation back to his professors and universities, so too, we can proudly trace our origins back to Jesus and his authority. Individually and collectively as a Church, we need to attack with the authority Christ gave us the evils in our homes, our lives, our communities, our nation, and our world. There is no excuse not to act. The task is overwhelming, but being overwhelmed does not constitute a reason for not acting.

Before we receive Holy Communion we pray "Thy will be done." When we walk out the door we had better make sure that God's will is done. It's our job to make sure that God's will is done here on earth as it is in heaven. AMEN.