

## Homily – 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year (B) Catechetical Sunday

Today is Catechetical Sunday, a day specially dedicated to appreciate the Church's teaching ministry and to honor our catechists in the Christian community. The theme for this year is, "**Catechesis and the Proclamation of the Word.**" The Word of God is the key. So, Scripture must be the driving force of any catechetical teaching to guarantee its effectiveness; there is power in God's Word. However, the Word of God is God (cf. John 1:1). The word is not a book or the Bible; the Word of God is a Person, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

This Word of God is the perfect Lord and God. As Scripture puts it, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all" (1John 1:5). This means that the One who is proclaimed is exceedingly greater than any of us. None of us is perfect; but he is perfect. We must, therefore, be careful about expecting the word of God to affirm us in our sinful situations. Rather, God's perfect word should always challenge us to abandon and sinful ways and to grow in holiness.

Our Gospel passage identifies the main content of our proclamation and teaching – the *KERYGMA*, in Greek (cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 16) which means "to proclaim". The message was so important that Jesus avoided any distractions. He and his disciples were on a journey through Galilee, "but he did not wish anyone to know about it." Why? "He was teaching his disciples and telling them 'The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise.'" "According to Pope Paul VI, "Evangelization will ... always contain – as the foundation, center, and at the same time, summit of its dynamism – a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God's grace and mercy" (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 27).

St Paul says, "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2Cor 4:5). The Church's approach is catechesis from "above"; therefore our teaching of the faith must be rooted in revelation and our method and language should be at the service of revelation (cf. Pope John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*. 31, 59; General Directory for Catechesis 149). We are not preaching human opinions but the Word of God revealed. It must be seen as an Ecclesial Act. We proclaim the faith of the Church.

Pope John Paul II points out that Catechesis "is the commu-

nication of the living mystery of God" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 7). We cannot just present Jesus as a topic or as something or as someone we know about. We are not merely giving out information; Jesus is presented as the person we must relate with. Hence he became man and also gave us the sacraments. Therefore, teaching for understanding and conversion is the hallmark of authentic catechesis – to change people's lives that they may respond positively to God's loving invitation.

The Gospel today underlines the danger of ignorance of Christ's teachings. The apostles "did not understand the saying [that Jesus will suffer, die and rise again], and they were afraid to question him." What a terrible error! Later when Jesus asks them, "What were you arguing about on the way? ... They remained silent." They were ashamed of themselves; they realized that they had dropped the ball. Contrary to the message of sacrifice and humility Christ was teaching, they "had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest." What a shame! So let us always pay attention to the Word of God proclaimed and taught. Many problems in our world are caused by ignorance of the word of God.

Apparently the early Christians had their fair share of this problem too. James tried to heal their tensions caused by jealousy, unhealthy rivalry and inordinate ambitions. As he puts it in our Second Reading, "Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice.... Where do the wars and ...conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members?" Authentic witnessing is important, as the diaconate ordination rite formula proclaims, "Believe what you read, preach what you believe and practice what you preach". We must touch people in their concrete socio-political, economic, and cultural lives (cf. *Ecclesia in America* 13).

On the whole, our catechesis and proclamation of the word must also recognize the place of the Holy Spirit. Finally, since catechesis and proclamation are directed at evangelization, we must proclaim and teach in a way that God's Word must "affect and upset our people's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation" (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 19).