

# CATHOLIC DISTANCE UNIVERSITY

## Homily for the Fourth Sunday on Ordinary Time

*Sunday, January 29, 2012*

By Fr. Bevil Bramwell, OMI

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9

I Corinthians 7:32-35

Mark 1:21-28

One of the great wonders of human history is that God wants to speak to us. This is greater than the seven wonders of the world, greater than some movie star coming to our town, greater than becoming president. The reason that this is so marvelous is that God created us for himself but it is here in our history that we prove ourselves acceptable or not.

In the *First Reading*, we hear from one of God's great prophets, Moses. God has scared the people of Israel so much when he appeared at Horeb so now they are quite happy to deal with one of God's prophets. So this is the first point: God is so awesome that we need a mediator. Secondly, Moses says that the prophet will speak with the voice of God. We need to hold on to that as well because the successor of the prophets, the Church also speaks with the voice of God. Although unfortunately the modern day church has absorbed too much of the modern western culture and so it is usually apologizing for its existence. But at bottom the Church speaks with the voice of God.

Then in the *Psalms*, we sing, as the Church community (which is why WE should sing it): "If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts." God is speaking to us. We can and do oppose his word because apparently we know better. In the first verse, we respond positively to God's word: "let us sing joyfully to the LORD." The psalmist has us singing as if we know how to respectfully relate to God: "Come, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the LORD who made us. For he is our God, and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides." Here is the picture of the Church, God's community guided by his hand. The last verse carries a caution. God has seen it all before. In their time in the desert, the so called People of God turned their backs on him. As Pope Benedict has reminded us, it is in the Old Testament that we learn how to stand before God and acknowledge him.

In the *Second Reading*, Paul is explaining Christian life—the life before God that we have been discussing—and he says that: "I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction." Here is the core of Christian life—if we genuinely want to serve God then we have to listen. He is not putting down marriage but he is saying that it

divides one's attention. So realistically there is place in the Church community for those who are not married. Those who choose not to get married but who commit themselves to Christ in his Church for their whole lives, then form a group that we know as religious. Religious set the example of people who listen to God full-time. So that the rest of us can see what it looks like to listen to God morning, noon and night.

Then in the *Gospel* we get back to the main thrust of the readings for today. Just as Paul was teaching with authority so we come to the one who is the reason that he could do this, Jesus Christ. His life, death and resurrection has brought the word of God and the power of God into the world, into the Church. There is a community that speaks with authority. So not only are we learning about the individual who should learn to respond to the authority of the Church that speaks with authority—and most Catholics don't most of the time. We also are learning something about this Word who came into the world and his power. He speaks this word and this power through the Church. This is amazing power: "A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." You would think that people would be impressed by this truth and this power but there is a terrible apathy among so many Catholics. They are just too comfortable. So the Lord has placed these facts before us. It is up to us what we want to decide to do, follow Christ in his Church or go out and have a good time?