

Bulletin Information: 2/1/09 – Black History Month/ Fourth Sunday After Epiphany – Year B

First Reading: Mark 1:21-28 (NRSV)

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and 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." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They 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." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Second Reading: From The Long Walk to Freedom Nelson Mandela's Autobiography

My solitude gave me a certain liberty, and I resolved to use it to do something I had been pondering for a long while: begin discussions with the government. I had concluded that the time had come when the struggle could best be pushed forward through negotiations. If we did not start a dialogue soon, both sides would be plunged into a dark night of oppression, violence, and war...It simply did not make sense for both sides to lose thousands if not millions of lives in a conflict that was unnecessary. They [the government] must have known this as well. It was time to talk.

This would be extremely sensitive. Both sides regarded discussions as a sign of weakness and betrayal. Neither would come to the table until the other made significant concessions...Someone from our side needed to take the first step, and my new isolation [in Pollsmoor Prison] gave me both the freedom to do so and the assurance, at least for a while, of the confidentiality of my efforts.

I chose to tell no one of what I was about to do. Not my colleagues upstairs or those in Lusaka [the ANC leadership in exile]. The ANC is a collective, but the government had made collectivity in this case impossible. I did not have the security or the time to discuss these issues with my organization. I knew that my colleagues upstairs would condemn my proposal, and that would kill my initiative even before it was born. There are times when a leader must move out ahead of his flock, go off in a new direction, confident that he is leading his people the right way. Finally, my isolation furnished my organization with an excuse in case matters went awry: the old man was alone and completely cut off, and his actions

were taken by him as an individual, not a representative of the ANC. (Mandela 1994, 457)

Reflection: ***“By Whose Authority?” Rev. Tim Agar***