

'JESUS FREES ME GENTLY FROM THE WHIRLWIND'  
4th Sunday Ordinary Time – HOMILY - 28 JANUARY 2018

WHIRLWIND

*"Today I see my people caught in what I feel is a terrible whirlwind,  
tossed about and trapped in a circle of confusion, frustration,  
often despair, unable to escape.  
I myself have been thrown about by that whirlwind.  
I have felt the confusion, the fear, the helplessness.  
Yet, in some strange and wonderful way,  
God is, by degrees and ever so gently,  
lifting me out of the whirlwind."*

[Extract from Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann's 1986 address to the Catholic Women's League. Miriam Rose is a Noted Aboriginal Artist, Educator, Consultant, Community activist and Writer on Spirituality, from Daly River in the Northern Territory.]

**As we know, there are many different experiences of terrible whirlwinds in life.**

Some have been traumatised, marginalised and discriminated against, because of their race, or gender, or religious beliefs or age.

Some have been physically, sexually, emotionally and spiritually abused by people that they had trusted, in church or family or society.

Some have experienced the whirlwind of war.

Some have experienced the downward spiral of drug addiction.

Some have done something they have never forgiven themselves for.

Some have been traumatised by an experience of a natural disaster.

Some have been traumatised by the excesses in their life style.

Some are lost in life, unable to find the meaning of life and their purpose.

LUKE AND MARK

**In Luke's Gospel** 4:16-23 Jesus is in the synagogue in **Nazareth**, as he visits and teaches in the synagogues in Galilee.

Jesus quotes from the scriptures of Isaiah to describe his mission and declares that this is being fulfilled today.

It is a key passage where the power of Jesus reaches out to us in the whirlwind of life.

He brings good news to the poor, proclaims release to captives, recovery of sight, to free the oppressed, proclaiming God's year of favour.

The rest of the Gospel shows us how Jesus fulfils his mission.

**In Mark's Gospel**, Jesus is in the synagogue in **Capernaum**,

We are not told the details of what he taught.

We are told that he taught them with authority.

We are told of a person with an unclean spirit present.

## HOW HARD WOULD IT BE TO HEAL SOMEONE, NOT WITHIN THE TERRIBLE WHIRLWINDS MENTIONED ABOVE, BUT IN A VERY DIFFERENT WAY, TO HEAL SOMEONE WHO HAS AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT?

What a horrible whirlwind that person would be in, with so little control over his life.

That Jesus lifts that person out of the whirlwind and restores him to serenity, amazes the people in the synagogue and they discuss it.

## WOULD THESE NEXT FOUR THOUGHTS BE IN THEIR DISCUSSION?

- Surely if he has such power and authority, it must be from God.
- If he has power over unclean spirits, what else does he have power over?
- If he has God-given power over unclean spirits, he must have power to help us in our daily lives.
- What can he do for us?

## TODAY'S GOSPEL

Today's Gospel of Mark 1:21-28 begins,

*"They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught."*

Last week the word "immediately" (euthus) was highlighted twice, in the call of Simon and Andrew, and in the call of James and John.

This word continues in today's passage.

The 1<sup>st</sup> use doesn't appear in the NRSV English translation above.

Let us look at a literal translation.

*"And they enter into Capernaum and **immediately** (euthus) on the Sabbaths entering into the synagogue he was teaching".*

The first use in this passage of "**immediately**".

And now to look at the 2<sup>nd</sup> use.

The Gospel continues,

*"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.'*

Again the word "**immediately**" (euthus) or as translated above "just then"

The word "euthus" has been used 1:12, 1:18, 1:20

since the public ministry of Jesus began after his baptism.

## HOW DO WE APPLY THE WORD "IMMEDIATELY" TO OUR VOCATION?

## WHAT IS URGENT IN OUR FAITH? WHERE IS GOD CALLING US NOW?

The man with an unclean spirit is present "**immediately**"

His need is "immediate" –

to be healed by Jesus, even though it is the Sabbath.  
No excuses. The Sabbath is not an excuse to delay healing.

### **WHAT IS THE TERRIBLE WHIRLWIND THAT THE MAN HAS EXPERIENCED?**

How long has it brought him isolation, confusion, frustration, arguments, fear?  
What do others think of him? Are they afraid of him?  
Do they move away if he comes near them?

But the word “immediately” reminds us in Mark’s Gospel  
of the urgency of Jesus’ ministry **now**,  
of his love for us **now**,  
of his healing **now**,  
**and of our service of Jesus now.**

*“But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent, and come out of him!’  
And the unclean spirit, throwing him into convulsions  
and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.”*

### **SET FREE**

And so, he is healed of the unclean spirit.  
He is freed to be himself. He is liberated.  
What an incredible moment.  
The Gospel passage doesn’t even try to describe how he feels.

*“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.”*

### **HOW ARE WE SEEKING TO BE FREE?**

#### **WHERE DOES GOD WANT TO WORK THROUGH US, TO FREE SOMEONE ELSE?**

**HOW DOES GOD WANT TO USE OUR VOICE, OUR HANDS, OUR FEET, OUR EYES, OUR EARS,  
OUR MERCY, OUR ADVOCACY, OUR SOLIDARITY, OUR COMPASSION, OUR LOVE**

**TO FREE SOMEONE ELSE,**

**TO LIFT THEM GENTLY OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND?**

**Immediately**, now, not next year, not next decade.

Let us pray.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/012818.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook28012018>]

Other References:

Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann – National Library of Australia (Trove)

Miriam Rose Foundation

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