

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“The people were astonished at (Jesus’) teaching because he taught with authority and not as the scribes.”

Mark 1: 22

Alive with Conviction. With reliable authenticity and personal authority. With a truthful demeanor; always courageously graceful under pressure. If you meet someone with these five characteristics, then you will have met an impressive individual. Jesus of Nazareth was such a person. We who live two thousand years after Jesus walked the face of this earth can only encounter him sacramentally and spiritually. But those who live when he lived could encounter him and interact with him. They could see him in action. They could hear his words and all that he had to say.

The sense I get when I read the Scriptures is that there was something very impressive, very real and very different about Jesus that distinguished him from all of his contemporaries. In the Gospel for this Sunday you can hear all of this as an underlying theme in his interaction with people as he burst on the scene in upper Galilee. I don’t know this personally but my sense is that there was something about his eyes that pierced your soul when you looked at him. But not with severity. Rather, with a gentleness almost unheard of. I think it was tremendously attractive and appealing to people. He had this way of looking at people that immediately put them at ease. There was not a severity to his countenance but a loving countenance that was light-hearted and almost joyful. Almost as if he didn’t know how harsh and cruel this life can sometimes be.

Except he did know and he would come to know it firsthand when the conspiracy to do away with him was hatched in the highest places of Religion and Politics. How can you tell someone that they are too innocent, too unaware of the barbarity of some people in our world when that very same person will die in agony nailed to a cross of wood? Jesus knows. But Jesus, the person, is different from anyone who ever lived even though he was one of us and like us in all things but sin. He offered all of us forgiveness as he hung there. It was his finest moment and his finest lesson. Yes, he taught with authority and not like the scribes. Does this make sense to you? That is the question of the week.