

Thought for the week
4th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

In today's Gospel we hear that someone '*possessed by an unclean spirit,*' recognises who Jesus is, calling him the '*Holy One of God.*' On another occasion the possessed person catches sight of Jesus, runs to him and falls down to do him homage. Whatever the nature of the possession there is a knowledge of Jesus' true nature that is hidden to the onlookers.

Why on these occasions does Jesus rebuke the spirit and tell it to be quiet? Why didn't Jesus take advantage of the publicity to help reveal his true nature to the onlookers? Perhaps one explanation is to consider how the spirits address Jesus. Today we hear the spirit saying, '*What do you want with us Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?*' And on another occasion, "*I implore you in God's name, do not torture me!*" Their reaction to Jesus is dread and fear because, being evil spirits, their idea of power is to rule and control by fear. Think of some of the evil regimes of Eastern Europe or the modern slave trade and human trafficking. This type of power crushes a person's spirit, paralyses their growth and removes the joy of living. Jesus didn't want people to believe in him because they were afraid of him, so rebuked the spirit.

Jesus demonstrated his power in a manner that the evil spirits would never be able to understand. To them it would seem like weakness; to allow himself to be humiliated and killed. But his resurrection proved him to be the '*Holy one of God*' and revealed that the power of our God resides in his love, mercy and compassion. These attributes revive a person's spirit, encourages their growth and brings joy to living.

As followers of Jesus we are called to encourage people to flourish and thrive by showing love, mercy and compassion as Jesus did and so release them from any fears that might be paralysing them.

"I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full."

John 10:10

Deacon Brian