



*Homily – Archdiocesan Religious Jubilarians Mass<sup>i</sup>*

*The Most Rev. José H. Gomez  
Archbishop of Los Angeles*

*Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels  
Los Angeles, California  
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My brothers and sisters in Christ, and especially you my dear religious jubilarians:

It is a joy to be with you to celebrate this holy Mass. I am so happy to join you for this beautiful day that is a special moment of grace for the whole Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

So we rejoice and give glory to God and offer thanksgiving for your jubilees — for your years of faithfulness and dedication to our Lord. For your humble service of prayer, for your ministries of catechesis and charity, and especially for your closeness to his poor and his sick.

His words apply to each one of you: “Well done, good and faithful servants!” Thanks be to God for your lives!

As we turn to our readings for his Holy Mass, we see that they cause us to reflect on the meaning of discipleship and our faith and following of Jesus Christ.

In the Gospel reading that we have just heard, from the Gospel of St. Mark, we are continuing our journey with Jesus in the early days of his public ministry.

Last Sunday, we heard Jesus call his first disciples by the Sea of Galilee — the fishermen Simon and Andrew, James and John. Now this Sunday we travel with the first disciples to Capernaum, another fishing village by the sea.

In our Gospel today, we enter into the synagogue on the Sabbath with Jesus. Along with his other disciples, we are in the congregation.

What is interesting about our Gospel today is that it never tells us what Jesus was teaching or talking about. We only hear what effect his words had on those who heard him.

We hear: “The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one have authority, and not as the scribes.”

The people somehow understand that Jesus is *not* like the scribes, who can only interpret and offer commentary on the Scriptures. The people understand that the Word that Jesus brings is not a human word — it is the Word of God.

So my brothers and sisters, we too need to be *astonished at his teaching*.

We need to realize that Jesus is speaking to you. He is speaking to me. Jesus is calling to us today, just as he called those disciples at Capernaum. He wants great things for each one of us! But we have to hear his voice, we have to listen.

We need to make sure what Jesus teaches and what his Church teaches has real *authority* in our lives. We need to make sure that his teaching is what decides how we live and how we think and how we act.

In our responsorial psalm for this Mass, we hear: *If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts*.

So today we have to ask ourselves — how well are we listening to God’s voice? Do we harden our hearts when we hear some words of Jesus? Are there teachings of his Catholic Church that we do not want to listen to, that we are ignoring?

Now is the time for us to work on all those obstacles, all those areas in our lives that make it difficult for us to hear God’s voice and follow his will for our lives. Let’s find ways to learn more about our Catholic faith and about the Scriptures! Let’s try to find more time to be quiet and pray. There is too much noise in all of our lives, too much “busy-ness.”

In our first reading today, we heard Moses promise that God would raise up a prophet and put his own words in the prophet’s mouth. Jesus is the prophet that Moses was talking about. But as we also see in our Gospel today, Jesus is more than a prophet.

We see that also today in the synagogue at Capernaum. As we heard, here is a man there with an unclean spirit and he begins yelling and making a big scene. And then we witnessed Jesus rebuking this spirit and driving the spirit out of the man.

I know it is hard for us sometimes to really “relate” when the Gospels talk about people possessed by unclean spirits.

But we do understand that evil is a reality in our world. And we know that we ourselves can sometimes become tempted and even become captive to sins in our lives. So we know this reality that the Gospel is speaking of.

What we are seeing in the synagogue at Capernaum is a revelation of the divinity of Jesus. We are being shown that Jesus is more than a Son of Man. Jesus is also the Son of God.

Our Christian faith is not a faith in an idea. It is not a faith in a set of teachings. Or a philosophy of life. Our faith is in a person — Jesus Christ. Perfect God and perfect Man.

That is why this Gospel should be a great cause for joy in our lives. Because our God has come to share in our human lives and to give us victory over evil and sin in our lives.

So we should rejoice in this, my brothers and sisters! Because this is the power that we have in the sacraments of his Catholic Church. The power of forgiveness of sins! The power of his grace coming in our lives.

In the Church's sacraments, Jesus still speaks his Word with power — especially in the Eucharist and in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Jesus gives us the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that we can receive forgiveness of sins and the strength of his grace to reject sin and grow in his love. We feel the freedom and the peace and serenity that this man felt in the synagogue at Capernaum. And we have the grace to love and forgive others. This is a great grace to know his love and forgiveness.

In our second reading today, St. Paul talks about being free from anxieties about the things of this world. This is the beautiful gift of our Catholic faith. Everything is possible for us now! We can attach ourselves to Jesus in love, without distraction. We can give ourselves completely to him.

If we believe in Jesus Christ — true God and true man. If we are working everyday to follow him and to mend our ways and to correspond to his grace grow in our life of faith.

So today, my brothers and sisters, in this beautiful jubilee celebration, let us give thanks for the witness of these religious jubilarians.

My dear jubilarians, I urge you, in this jubilee time, to renew in your heart your vows and your practice of the evangelical counsels. Offer yourselves in a new ways and with new fervor to our Lord. Open yourselves to the plans and purposes that our Lord still wishes to accomplish in your lives.

And let us pray that we all make a daily commitment to be disciples of Jesus. To search for holiness and to bear witness to the love of God in our lives.

Let us all try to grow every day in our faith in Jesus Christ, true God and true man. And let us pray to really hear his Word and let it astonish us, and change us, so that we are growing always in grace, with our faith renewed in his Sacraments.

And let us ask our Blessed Mother, the Mother of all of us, to intercede and watch over us all with a tender love.

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<sup>i</sup> Readings (Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time): Deut. 18:15–20; Ps. 95:1–2, 6–9; 1 Cor. 7:32–35; Mark 1:21–28.