

Sunday, January 29, 2012

4 Sunday B
Giving Increase

Reflection from John Surette, SJ

“Then they came to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.” (Mark 1:21-22)



There is nothing unusual here. Following the custom of his time, Jesus, an adult male member of the community, took his turn at teaching those gathered in the synagogue.

What is unusual is the quality of his teaching. It was so different from that of the scribes who were the official teachers and interpreters of the law. Those gathered in the synagogue recognized this unusual quality and marveled at it for “he taught them as one having authority...”

I submit three words for your reflection. They are: author, augment, and authority. Notice that they all begin with the letters “au.” This “au” derives from ancient languages and it means “to give increase.”

Author... The person who authors a new cookbook makes some new recipes available and thus gives increase to the number of menu possibilities for the home kitchen and the restaurant kitchen.

Augment... The person who joins a group working to help the homeless augments that group of workers, thus giving increase to its size and effectiveness.

Authority... The teacher who teaches in a way that influences, excites, and activates the imaginations of the students is a teacher who gives increase to them.

Those who listened to the teachings of the rabbi Jesus noticed that their lives were enhanced. They were changed by what they heard. They experienced an increase within themselves. True authority gives an increase, while false authority gives a decrease.

Parents have authority over their children. They can spoil their children and prevent them from growing into the unique persons they might become, thus giving them a decrease. Or the parents can encourage their children and give them the space they need to learn, grow, develop their talents, and even make mistakes, thus giving them an increase.

THE WELL

A Center for our
Sacred Unity with
God, Earth, and
One Another.

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Friends have authority over each other. They can neglect to grow their relationship, thus giving each other a decrease, or they can strive to nurture and deepen their relationship, thus gifting each other with an increase.

The clergy have authority over the laity in the church. The clergy can put down the laity, treat them as children, and not listen to their advice, thus giving them a decrease, or the clergy can clear the way for the laity to assume their rightful responsibilities and cheer them on as they carry out these responsibilities, thus giving the laity an increase.

How desperately we modern people need to receive increase in our lives. Some of us are so busy attending to the demands of daily life that we yearn for some small increase in quiet or meditation time.

Many of us are so caught up in our materialistic and consumerist culture that our souls cry out for some increase in meaning and significance beyond all of our accumulated stuff.

All of us are citizens of planet Earth, a planet that in this 21st century is suffering a decrease in the vitality of its life systems, a planet that cries out for an increase in that vitality before it is too late.

May we desire each day to be recipients of and givers of an increase. May it be a receiving and a giving that will lead us into more abundant life. May it be a receiving and giving that will lead our families, our communities, all of humanity, and Earth itself into the greater abundance.

May each of us be enthusiastic about giving increase!