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Good News!

January 29, 2012
FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Dt 18:15–20 / 1 Cor 7:32–35 / Mk 1:21–28

Anyone who has served as a substitute teacher or babysitter or interim manager or even guest preacher knows the challenge of stepping into a role of authority over people who aren't familiar with you. It's possible they will hear your message or lesson plan with anticipatory ears, awakened from their usual routine. More likely, though, will be complaints: "Our teacher doesn't do it *that way*," or "*That's* not how Mom makes our grilled-cheese sandwiches," or "Our pastor doesn't preach that long!"

Jesus had a similar experience in the synagogue in Capernaum. It was customary for men in the community to take a turn teaching in the synagogue. However, Jesus' teaching was like none the people had heard before—he spoke as one with authority. You can imagine the murmurings that traveled among the hearers, "Our scribes don't teach that way." "That's not what we're used to hearing!" One unclean

spirit even confronted Jesus.

Certainly this wouldn't be the last time Jesus' teachings led him into controversy. His continual challenge of the status quo eventually provoked those in power to send him to the cross.

But the Gospel reports that the people in Capernaum were "amazed" at his new teaching. Most responded with awe and respect for his profound words.

We who have been Christians for a while may think we know this Jesus and his teachings. We may have decided what his message is, and we may have constructed for ourselves a simple Christianity that just requires us to be "nice" to others.

But are we willing to hear Jesus with new ears? His teachings are challenging, and they ought to shake us to the core. Will we, too, be amazed?

Janel Esker/sundaybulletins@liguori.org

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