

**5<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF THE YEAR - B - 2006**  
***“Reshaping our imagination”***

We are still in the first chapter of Mark’s account of the gospel. We are still trying to understand the implications of Jesus’ words,

*This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.*

This is another way of saying that the stories we hear about the cure of the man with demon last week and the cure of Peter’s mother-in-law this week are each trying to help us understand those implications. Remember how we said that Mark is calling us to dare to dream about new possibilities? Things don’t have to remain the way they are. The kingdom of God is here. When God has entered into our lives, things become possible that we never could have imagined. When we are open to the flow of divine love in our lives, things change. Its like God wants to reshape our imagination! And that will reshape the way we live.

Last week, for instance, the man with the demon can represent for us that quality each of us has that resists the flow of divine love in our lives. In fact, that is why that man’s spirit is unclean. It resists the flow of divine love in Jesus. Maybe the reason the evil spirit could recognize who Jesus was is because he realized he had absolutely no power to control Jesus. Jesus was goodness. Jesus was love. The goodness of Jesus’ love was stronger than the demon’s power to resist, and that’s why it was so easily cast out by Jesus. Imagine the possibilities if we really believed that good was stronger than evil, if love was stronger than hatred. It would change the way we live, the way we deal with people. Rather than confront evil with more evil, we would try to overcome evil with good. Imagine!

This week, Jesus cures Peter's mother-in-law. But Mark doesn't just say he cured her. He says, "*He grasped her hand and helped her up.*" The phrase "*helped her up*" is the same phrase that Mark will use for God's "*raising*" Jesus in the resurrection. As she was lifted up to a new life of service as a disciple, Jesus will be lifted up to a new life. And he will promise that new life to us. And what is that new life? It is the flow of divine life that existed for all eternity. We will share in the divine life of grace. Or, if we accept the idea that God is love, we can say that God's love will dwell within us, among us, around us. We will enter into the divine and the divine will enter into us. Imagine!

Maybe this is why Jesus broke away from the crowds for awhile. He needed some solitude with his Father in prayer. He knew that this was really what it was all about: enabling the people he encountered to enter into the union of love he had with his Father. That's what he was after. The disciples didn't get it. They thought Jesus had come so the people could be amazed by him and to admire him. He was becoming famous, and he should enjoy his notoriety and play it to his advantage. And, of course, the disciples would bask in the glow of it all themselves. But Jesus would have nothing to do with that. He wasn't about fame or becoming a celebrity. He had absolutely no interest in any of that. He was about changing peoples' hearts. That was his mission, and he wasn't to be deterred. What would happen if we forgot about being famous, or about being important or rich or powerful, and just did the work God gave us to do? Imagine?

*"Reshaping our imaginations,"* what a daunting task. We just don't think big enough. After all, who are we? Well, listen to the prayers of the Church before you answer. In Eucharistic Prayer #2 we say to the Father:

*We thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you.*

That prayer is talking about us, worthy to stand in the presence of the Father. Imagine! We come here and pray that we get along with one another, that we can heal our broken relationships. And that is good. But the Church's prayer says:

*May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit.*

Can we even imagine that kind of unity; a unity in God's flow of love? Imagine! We pray that we go to heaven, and that our loved ones go to heaven. That's good. But again, listen to the vision the Church has for us:

*Have mercy on us all; make us worthy to share eternal life with Mary, the virgin Mother of God, with the apostles, and with all the saints who have done your will throughout the ages.*

Before Communion we pray, "Grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety." Is that possible? Imagine! By the way, if we don't think it is, is it God's fault or ours?

This last example is not from the prayers of Mass. It is just a story I heard. You may have heard it, too.

*Terry Bradshaw, the former great quarterback of the Pittsburgh Steelers dies and goes to heaven. God sees him and says, "Terry, it is good to see you. You were such a great quarterback to win the Super Bowl twice and make the Football Hall of Fame, that I have prepared a big mansion for you." So God takes Terry to see it and Terry is thrilled. It is three stories with a beautifully landscaped yard.*

*As he was about to enter it, Terry noticed another mansion across the street which was even bigger, and it had a more beautiful yard with gorgeous trees and flowers. But it was also decorated in Seattle Seahawk banners, logos with a 12<sup>th</sup> Man Flag rising from the roof. So Terry turns back to God and says, “God, why are you giving a more beautiful mansion to Matt Hasselback, after all, this is his first Super Bowl and he’s not a Hall of Famer?” And God says to Terry, “Oh, that’s not Matt Hasselback’s mansion. That’s mine.”*

Imagine!