

One thing that strikes me about today's readings from Sacred Scripture is the contrast between the first reading and the gospel.

The first reading, from the Book of Job is from that set of writings in the Old Testament which are collectively called the Wisdom literature. The Book of Job is philosophical in tone, but also beautifully poetic. Yet Job remains primarily the Word of God. Job is a divinely inspired philosopher and teacher. He seems to sit in his philosopher's chair, barely moving throughout the span of his long discourse.

In the gospel, by way of contrast, Saint Mark has Jesus on the move. The focus continues to be on the Person of Jesus and what he does, rather on the content of his teaching. Today's gospel is the second part of Mark's account of the first day of Jesus' public ministry. You may recall that last Sunday, Mark had Jesus teaching and casting out an evil spirit in the synagogue at Capernaum. In today's gospel, he leaves the synagogue with James and John and goes STRAIGHT to the house of Simon and Andrew. He goes out! He doesn't spend his first day on mission hanging around the synagogue. Yes, his day BEGINS at the synagogue, but then he goes out, on mission. And this mission is a mission of healing. He begins by healing Simon Peter's mother-in-law from fever (the one thing for which Peter never forgave him). She, in turn, begins or resumes a ministry of service. Word quickly gets around about what has happened and before long the whole town comes to him as he cures their diseases, casts out their demons and relieves their suffering. The next morning, Jesus takes himself off to a lonely place to resume his cycle of personal prayer, liturgical prayer, teaching and good works of healing and exorcism.

As the Second Vatican Council taught, the Eucharistic liturgy, Holy Mass, is not only the height of the Church's liturgy, which also comprises the Sacraments and the Prayer of the Church or the Liturgy of the Hours, but the Mass is the summit and source of our whole life in the Church. Everything else that we do in the Church flows from our Eucharistic celebration and returns to it. But we can't return to it if we never go out!

And we can't go out as a sect. Jesus went out and he ends up welcoming the whole town of Capernaum with a ministry of teaching and healing.

Later on today the young adults who come to this parish will go out to one venue or other in Surry Hills. In several other ways we are putting our feet in the water of the parish of Surry Hills. This property, with this consecrated church building is more or less at the centre of the geographical parish, but it is only a part of the parish albeit the most critical part - the rest of the parish is out there IN Surry Hills - all those people out there - the whole town, in terms of today's gospel.