

Robert Lee Scott, Jr was born in 1908, and served as a pilot in the China-Burma-India theatre - supporting the war effort in the Pacific by flying dangerous missions over the Himalaya mountains. He was one of the first flying aces in World War II, with 388 combat missions and 925 flight hours.

General Scott wrote about his time “flying the Hump,” as this was called, in his 1943 book *God is My Co-Pilot*.

In today’s Gospel, we hear about Jesus’ fame spreading throughout Galilee; and the crowds saying in amazement:

*"What is this? A new teaching with authority.
He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him."*

Which begs the question as to just what is legitimate authority?

The word authority has the same Latin roots as the word ‘author’ - which means to give life to, or cause to grow. And that is a very important image for understanding the differences between true and false authority.

The Church teaches us that:

Authority does not derive its moral legitimacy from itself. It must not behave in a despotic manner, but must act for the common good as a ‘moral force based on freedom and a sense of responsibility’ (CCC 1902)

In other words, true authority is from the Author of all things - namely God. And this too is reflected St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans:

*"There is no authority except from God,
and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God" (Rom 13:1)*

Yet, in the Gospel, the crowds were “were astonished at [Jesus’] teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.”

In other words, true authority is almost palpable - it’s something that reaches deep into your being ... and rocks you to your roots.

Recently, with apologies to General Scott, there have appeared bumper stickers that read: “If God is your co-pilot - switch seats!”

In our contemporary world with its conflicting experts and self-proclaimed authorities on television and in newspapers; it is important that we recognize that no human authority exists without God having willed it. And the safest way to realize God’s authority is through our own life of prayer, lived in His grace, and surrendered to His will.

Let us pray for a deeper surrender to God’s will, so that in knowing the Father through His Son Jesus Christ, we may be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.