

Nearly twenty years ago, I enlisted in the US Navy. Two years later, I deployed overseas – a Naval Aircrewman, trained in Cryptology, holding a Top-Secret clearance.

In those two years, I hadn't seen too much of the world yet. Great Lakes Naval Base north of Chicago, the Presidio of Monterey in California, Pensacola Naval Air Station in Florida, and a couple other bases were where I had trained for most of those two years.

Some of those bases looked like beautiful parks or even college campuses. At least on the outside. But there were areas – certain buildings, the flight line, and even particular areas – where you came across, in big red letters the words: AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY.

When you saw those signs, you probably also saw barbed wire fences, gates, and even armed guards. Those were important places where aircraft were maintained, classified materials were stored and disseminated. Those were the places where, unless you had the right clearance or authorization ... you simply moved along.

Today is the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time. And in the Gospel, we hear that the crowds “*were amazed*” at Jesus. His words were “[*a*] *new teaching with authority.*” Something they hadn't seen.

This word *authority*, has its roots as the words *authorized*, as well as the word *author*.

In many cases, the *author of authority* is someone in charge. In the military, a general or a colonel, or an admiral or a captain would sign off on whether or not someone was authorized to be somewhere or do something.

A Driver's License is authorized by the Secretary of State. Teachers have licenses issued by the state, Lawyers have to pass the bar exam, Doctors have to be certified to practice.

Yet Jesus doesn't have anybody's permission to teach. At least not that anybody knows.

Rather, Jesus' authority comes directly from God.

Almost immediately He is challenged by a demon. And instead of backing down, Jesus sends the demon packing.

Jesus' authority comes from the *author of life Himself* – when Jesus speaks, it is with the authority of God.

Our own spiritual lives are fraught with ups and downs. Sometimes we get it right, sometimes we get it wrong. The key is to recognize that as Christians, we belong to God through Christ. When we make ourselves the authority, and cut out the author of life – in any area of our lives, big or small, we find ourselves ... sometimes rather quickly ... over our heads.

True authority comes from God. And true authority is accompanied by signs of God's power.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us place ourselves under the Authority of Jesus Christ. Let us renew in our hearts the promises of our Baptism, and submit ourselves to God's authority. And may the graces of this Eucharist be for us a sign of God's power in our lives.