

January 24, 2016 The Songwriter & His Singer Homily:

Brothers and sisters, one of the most successful songwriters in recent memory is Paul Anka. Many of his songs were hugely popular, and reached the top of the billboard charts. Anka was also a savvy businessman. He recognized that the key to selling his music was to select a recording artist who could best interpret his songs and make them appealing to the listening public. The singer who knows the mind of the songwriter and is blessed with a sweet singing voice is very likely the one to sell many records. One of Anka's most popular songs was "My Way". It was written with one of the great interpreters of modern music in mind, the legendary Frank Sinatra. One could not imagine this song being written for entertainers such as Kate Smith or Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones! To this day, it remains Sinatra's signature song.

In full view of our gospel reading today, we might ask ourselves: Who is best suited to proclaim and interpret the Word of God? Is there anyone more qualified than the "Living, Eternal Word", Jesus Christ Himself? As Pope Benedict has put it: "Not only does the Word have a voice, now the Word has a face, one which one can see"!

A little background to today's reading: For the Jews the Sabbath was a day of rest and prayer. On the Sabbath, they would gather together in the synagogue to be instructed in the word of God (Torah, writings of the prophets). It is clear that Our Lord was an observant Jew who joined the assembly of his fellow Jews in prayer and worship. It seems Jesus had already established a reputation for himself as an itinerant Rabbi and gifted preacher. In the words of St. Luke, "news of him had spread" and "He was praised by all" (Lk. 4:15). Upon concluding his preaching, "all looked intently at Him" (Lk. 4:20). It was a silence charged with attention! By proclaiming "this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing" Jesus is making it abundantly clear to his congregation that He is the fulfillment of Old Testament promises!

What lessons can we all learn from today's gospel?

First, whoever listens to the Sacred Word in a spirit of faith will always encounter Jesus, "who has the Words of everlasting life" (Jn. 6:69); Second, the gospel presents us with a personal challenge. Are we able to listen to the Word of God? Before we can speak of God, we must first listen to Him. Do the many distractions in our daily life make it more difficult for us to listen to Our Blessed Lord? ; Third, it makes us think about how we live Sunday, a day of rest and a day for the family. It is a day to devote to the Lord; do we join the assembly of our fellow Christians in prayer and worship? In addition, we are invited to ponder the question, "who is best suited to interpret the word for us today?" The Church never ceases to remind us that the holy saints are singled out for praise because they all allow "the Word" to assume an ever larger role in how they live their daily life. Some of you may recall a clever advertisement for a brokerage firm that turned up on television many years ago. It depicted a crowded restaurant in which two men are in an animated conversation. One asks his dining companion a pointed question; "What does your broker recommend?" "My broker is E.F. Hutton", he replies. (Everyone in restaurant now overhears the conversation) "And when E.F. Hutton talks, people listen!"

When Jesus spoke in his hometown synagogue, the congregation listened. What about us today?