

Who Has Authority? Discussion and Reflection Questions

The purpose of this reflection is to help youth consider who they give authority to in their lives. Who do teenagers listen to? What is The Magisterium of the Catholic Church?

Today we are going to talk about authority. What do you think the word “authority” means?

Let them spend a few minutes trying to define authority.

Authority can be a characteristic. One definition of authority is

The power to influence others, especially because of one’s commanding manner or one’s recognized knowledge about something.

“he has the natural authority of one who is used to being obeyed”

Authority can also describe a person:

A person with extensive or specialized knowledge about a subject; an expert.

“”she was an authority on the stock market””

So an authority is someone who leads with confidence and knowledge. An authority also has the power to influence those around him or her.

- Who are some people you would consider as authorities based on their knowledge?
- Who are some people who have authority due to their commanding manner or confidence?
- Who has the power to influence you?

These are the people who are authorities in your life.

Read [Mark 1:21-28](#)

Then they came to Capernaum, and on the sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.

In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!”

Jesus rebuked him and said, “Quiet! Come out of him!” The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him.

All were amazed and asked one another, “What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.”

His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

[Mark 1:21-28](#)

The people are amazed by the authority of Jesus. He teaches with knowledge and he acts with confidence, even being able to command an unclean spirit to leave.

- What specifically does Jesus do in this gospel that shows authority?
- Where does the authority of Jesus come from?
- How willing are you to see Jesus as an authority?
- Do you give Jesus the same sort of authority to influence you as you give to friends and celebrities? Why or why not?

Jesus’ authority comes from his relationship with the Father. He spends time in prayer. He studies and understands scripture. He trusts that the Father will do what is necessary to carry out his will. These are all good things for us to do also.

Another definition of authority shows that it can be passed from one person to another:

The right to act in a specified way, delegated from one person or organization to another.

Police have the authority to arrest criminals.

So an authority, like the government, can give others, like the police, authority to carry out tasks. Your school gives your teachers the authority to teach you. Through licensing states give doctors the authority to practice medicine. In the same way, Jesus has given the Church authority to teach, confer the sacraments, and pass on the faith. This has been delegated for two thousand years, starting with the apostles.

The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me

Luke 10:16

We call this authority of the Church to teach us The Magisterium.

Sometimes it is difficult to accept Church authority. We might disagree with something the Church teaches. Or we might find it inconvenient. But we must remember that the Church has thousands of years of knowledge. And we depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So we cannot just lightly reject Church teachings just because we don’t like them.

- Are there any Church teachings you find difficult to accept?
- What might you do to better understand these teachings? (talk to a priest, read [YOUCAT](#) or the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#))

- Why do you think it is easier to accept our friends, social media, and pop culture as authority that we accept the Church authority?

This week, pick one topic and spend some time trying to understand the Church teaching on it a little better. Use some of the methods we talked about. And spend some time praying to the Holy Spirit for the gift of understanding.