

Friday of the Twenty-seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 11:15-26): When Jesus had driven out a demon, some of the crowd said: “By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he drives out demons.” Others, to test him, asked him for a sign from heaven.

But he knew their thoughts and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house. And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that it is by Beelzebul that I drive out demons. If I, then, drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man fully armed guards his palace, his possessions are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him, he takes away the armor on which he relied and distributes the spoils. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

“When an unclean spirit goes out of someone, it roams through arid regions searching for rest but, finding none, it says, ‘I shall return to my home from which I came.’ But upon returning, it finds it swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and brings back seven other spirits more wicked than itself who move in and dwell there, and the last condition of that man is worse than the first.”

“Some of the crowd said: “By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he drives out demons.”

Today, we are amazed to see how Jesus is preposterously “accused” of driving out demons “by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons” (Lk 11:15). It is difficult to imagine a better deed—to expel, to rid their souls of the Devil, the instigator of evil—and, at the same time, to witness the most ignoble accusation—that He is doing it, precisely, by the power of the very Devil—. It is really a unwarranted accusation, which shows and reflects a great blindness and jealousy in the Lord's accusers. Today too, without realizing it, we tend to ignore the right other people have to dissent, to be different and to have their own positions, whether different or even in direct opposition to ours.

He, who lives cloistered in a political, cultural or ideological bigotry, easily despises the dissenting one and disqualifies all his projects by denying him any proficiency and, even, any honesty. Often, the political or ideological adversary becomes a personal enemy. Confrontation degenerates into affront and aggressiveness. This climate of mutual zealotry and violent rejection may then lead us to the temptation of somehow eliminating he who appears to be our rival.

In this environment is it easy to justify any attack against people, even, murder, provided the dead one does not belong in our circle. How many people are today distressed by this atmosphere of mutual intolerance and denial, which, more often than not, is to be found in our public institutions, our places of work or in meetings and political confrontation!

We must create, amongst ourselves, a climate of tolerance and mutual respect with the conditions for steadfast and loyal confrontations, where it is possible to seek different ways of dialogue. As for we Christians, rather than hardening and wrongly consecrating our positions by manipulating God's word and identifying Him with our own attitude, we have to follow that Jesus who—when John wanted to prevent someone else from casting out demons in His name—corrected him while saying: “Do not prevent him, for whoever is not against you is for you” (Lk 9:50). Inasmuch as “the countless chorus of shepherds becomes the single body of the one and only Shepherd” (St. Augustine).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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"When Christ came, he banished the devil from our hearts, in order to build in them a temple for himself. Let us therefore do what we can with his help, so that our evil deeds will not deface that temple." (Saint Caesarius of Arles)

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"The Evil One always seeks to spoil God's work, sowing division in the human heart, between body and soul, between the individual and God, in interpersonal, social and international relations... The Evil One sows discord; God creates peace." (Benedicto XVI)

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"The power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite. He is only a creature, powerful from the fact that he is pure spirit, but still a creature. He cannot prevent the building up of God's reign..." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 395)