Thursday of the Third Week of Lent

Gospel text (*Lk* 11:14-23): Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute, and when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke and the crowds were amazed. Some of them 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.”

“If it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you”

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Today in the proclamation of the Word of God, the figure of the devil appears again: “Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute” (Lk 11:14). Every time the texts speak to us of the devil, we may feel a little uncomfortable. In any case, it is true that evil exists, and that it has roots so deep that we cannot succeed in eliminating them completely. It is also true that evil has a very wide dimension: it is “at work” and we cannot control it in any way. But Jesus came to fight these forces of evil, the devil. He is the only one who can drive him out.

Jesus has been slandered and accused: the devil can achieve everything. While people marvel at what Jesus Christ has done, “some of them said, ‘By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he drives out demons’” (Lk 11:15).

Jesus’ response shows the absurdity of the argument of those who contradict him. Incidentally, this

response is for us a call to unity, to the strength that comes from union. Disunity, on the other hand, is a malevolent and destructive ferment. Precisely, one of the signs of evil is division and a lack of understanding between one another. Unfortunately, today's world is marked by this kind of evil spirit that prevents understanding and recognition of one another.

It is good to meditate on how we collaborate to "drive out demons" or cast out evil. Let us ask ourselves: do I do what is necessary for the Lord to cast out evil from within me? Do I collaborate sufficiently in this "driving out"? Because "from the heart come evil thoughts" (Mt 15:19). The response of each one is very important, that is, the necessary collaboration on a personal level.

May Mary intercede before Jesus, her beloved Son, so that he drives out from our hearts and from the world any kind of evil (wars, terrorism, mistreatment, any kind of violence). Mary, Mother of the Church and Queen of Peace, pray for us!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Let the souls of the faithful examine themselves and judge the innermost affections of their hearts with true discernment, and, if they find anything planted in their consciences from the fruits of charity, they need not doubt that God is within them.” (Saint Leo the Great)

- “Either you are on the path of love, or you are on the path of hypocrisy. Either you let yourself be loved by the mercy of God, or you do what you want, according to your heart which grows harder, each time, on this path. Either you’re holy or you take the other path. Whoever ‘doesn’t gather’ with the Lord, scatters. He/she is a corruptor, one who corrupts.” (Francis)

- “The finger. ‘It is by the finger of God that [Jesus] cast out demons’ (Lk 11:20). If God's law was written on tablets of stone ‘by the finger of God,’ then the "letter from Christ" entrusted to the care of the apostles, is written ‘with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts’ (...).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 700)