

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”

Fr. Josep GASSÓ i Lécera
(Ripollet, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, in the proclamation of the Word of God, the figure of the devil appears once more: “He was driving out a demon” (Lk 11:14). Each time the texts speak of the devil, we feel, maybe, slightly uncomfortable. However, it is true evil exists, and it is so deeply rooted we cannot fully remove it. It is also true evil has a very broad scope: it keeps on “digging” and we simply cannot stop it. Yet, Jesus has come to

fight these evil forces, to fight the devil; He is the only one who can drive him out.

Jesus has been slandered and accused: the devil is able to achieve everything. While the people were amazed at what Jesus Christ had 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 from those contradicting Him. Besides, this answer means for us a call to unity, to the strength meant by that unity. Disunity is an evil and destructive yeast instead. One of the evil signs is, precisely, division and making us unable to understand each other. Unfortunately, the present world is marked by this type of evil spirit, which prevents our understanding, and recognition of one another.

It will be good for us to ponder over which should be our participation in the task of “driving out the devil”, or keeping him away. Let's wonder: do I contribute with what is needed so that our Lord expels evil from me? “For from the heart come evil thoughts” (Mt 15:19). It is very important the response we can all give, that is, our necessary cooperation at a personal level.

Let's hope the Virgin Mary intercedes before Jesus, her beloved Son, so that He expels any type of evil from the world (wars, terrorism, mistreatment, violence) and from our heart, too. Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church and Queen of Peace, pray for us!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“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)

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“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)

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“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, N° 700)