

Thursday 3rd of Lent

Gospel text (Lk 11,14-23): One day Jesus was driving out a dumb demon. When the demon had been driven out, the mute person could speak, and the people were amazed. Yet some of them said, «He drives out demons by the power of Beelzebul, the chief of the demons». So others wanted to put him to the test by asking him for a heavenly sign.

But Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, «Every nation divided by civil war is on the road to ruin, and will fall. If Satan also is divided, his em-pire is coming to an end. How can you say that I drive out demons by calling upon Bee-lze-bul? If I drive them out by Beelzebul, by whom do your fellow mem-bers drive out demons? They will be your judge, then. But suppose I drive out demons by the finger of God; would not this mean that the kingdom of God has come upon you? As long as the strong and armed man guards his house, his goods are safe. But when a stronger one attacks and overcomes him, the challenger takes away all the weapons he relied on and disposes of his spoils. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me, scatters».

«Suppose I drive out demons by the finger of God; would not this mean that 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 once more: «One day Jesus was driving out a dumb 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, «Yet, some of them said, ‘He drives out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the chief of the demons’» (Lk 11:15).

Jesus' response shows the absurdity of the argument from those contradicting him. In passing, this answer means for us a call to unity, to the strength meant by the unity. Disunity, instead, is an evil and destructive ferment. 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 cooperation in this matter of “throwing out the devil”, or keeping off evil. Let's wonder: do I contribute with what is needed so that our Lord expels evil from me? For «out of 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!