Monday of the Third Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 3:22-30): The scribes who had come from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “By the prince of demons he drives out demons.” Summoning them, he began to speak to them in parables, “How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand; that is the end of him. But no one can enter a strong man’s house to plunder his property unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house. Amen, I say to you, all sins and all blasphemies that people utter will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin.” For they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

“But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness”

Fr. Vicenç GUINOT i Gómez
(Sant Feliu de Llobregat, Spain)

Today, when we read about this event in the Gospel we are more than a little surprised when “The scribes who had come from Jerusalem” recognize Jesus' compassion for the oppressed and witness the divine miracles with which He blesses them, but then say, “He is possessed by Beelzebul”, and “By the prince of demons he drives out demons.” (Mk 3:22). It is surprising how even intelligent people permit personal and religious animosity to blind them to the good in others. These teachers were in the presence of Him who personified Goodness. They must have sensed, as did others, the unassuming Heart of Jesus, and they will have understood that they stood before One who was the only true Innocent. Yet, because of their intransigence, they obstinately refused to acknowledge Him. Those who claimed to be knowledgeable in the things of God were those who not only did not recognize Him, but who also accused Him of being satanic.

While others might have retaliated in an angry outburst, or turned away from them and their contemptuous accusation, our Lord does not, for He knows that He must try to convince them of His divinity for the sake of their souls. As saint John Paul II asserted, our Lord “is an insuperable testimony of patient loving and humble gentleness.” His unlimited graciousness brings Him to try to open their closed hearts by reasoning with them by parables, but to no avail. Finally, Jesus in the divine but stern authority of the Godhead warns them that their hard-heartedness is rebellion against the Holy Spirit, and that it

will never be forgiven (cf. Mk 3:29). That rebellion remains unforgiving, not because God does not want to forgive, but because, to be forgiven, one must first recognize one's sin, which the rebellious will not do.

The Master knows that His followers also experience that same obstinacy, even when they are acting in good faith for the benefit of unbelievers. All of us will, at times, face the same kind of difficulties and rejection as Jesus did. When we do, let us remember Saint Teresa of Jesus when she was leading her sisters closer to holiness.

Let us not be surprised therefore, if we find in our path these contradictions. They will just be the sign we are following the right way of life. Let us then pray for these people and ask our Lord to give us the necessary patience.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

-“The devil is an evil master, who always mingles false things with true, that the semblance of truth may cover the witness of fraud.” (Saint Bede the Venerable).

-“They wanted this generation and many others to believe that the Devil was a myth, the idea of evil. However, the Devil exists and we have to fight against him. Even if we are not quite convinced of this reality.” (Francis)

-“The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him (...). So miracles strengthen faith in the One who does his Father's works; they bear witness that he is the Son of God. But his miracles can also be occasions for ‘offence’; they are not intended to satisfy people's curiosity or desire for magic. Despite his evident miracles some people reject Jesus; he is even accused of acting by the power of demons.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 548)