Sunday 10th (B) in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 3:20-35): Jesus came home with his disciples. Again the crowd gathered, making it impossible for them even to eat. When his relatives heard of this they set out to seize him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." 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 the 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."

His mother and his brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him. A crowd seated around him told him, "Your mother and your brothers and your sisters are outside asking for you." But he said to them in reply, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

"How can Satan drive out Satan?"

Fr. Salomon BADATANA Mccj
(Wau, South Sudan)

Today, the Gospel invites us to ponder on two irreconcilable enemies: Jesus and the evil spirit. The Gospel affirms: The scribes who had come from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul" (Mk 3:22). This verse helps us to understand the concerns of the family members of Jesus who came to take him back home. In fact, Jesus is not accused because he broke the Law, or the Jewish customs, or the Sabbath. Nor is he accused of blasphemy. Rather, he is accused of being possessed by the chief of demons. And we may realize that this is one of the first accusations directed to Jesus about something other than breaking a Jewish Law.

But the interesting fact is the answer Jesus gave them: “How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand… no one can enter a strong man's house to plunder his property unless he first ties up the strong man” (Mk 3:23-24.27). This shows that Jesus completely repudiates the idea that he is working for Satan. For this reason, he begins to speak in parables about the house of the strong man. Indeed, this parable seems to relate directly to the mission of Jesus. And this mission reveals the Kingdom of God by binding the strong man, Satan, through the work done by Jesus.

In fact, the casting out of evil spirits by Jesus tells us that He is stronger than Satan. Pope Francis in a general audience affirmed: “It is enough to open [a] newspaper to see that around us there is the presence of evil, the Devil is at work. But I would like to say in a loud voice: God is stronger! Do you believe this, that God is stronger?”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Since you wish to belong entirely to God, why do you fear your weakness, in which it is clear that you should not and cannot rely on yourself? Do you not hope in God? And he who hopes in Him, will he be confounded? No, he will never be confounded!” (Saint Francis de Sales)

- “His Mother, however, always followed him faithfully, keeping the eyes of her heart fixed on Jesus. Let us ask Mary to help us too to keep our gaze firmly fixed on Jesus and to follow him always, even when it costs what it may.” (Francis)

- “One cannot believe in Jesus Christ without sharing in his Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to men who Jesus is. For "no one can say "Jesus is Lord", except by the Holy Spirit"... Only God knows God completely.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 152)

Other comments

«But whoever slanders the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven»

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 teachers of the Law 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 Beelzebub», and «the chief of the demons helps him to drive 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 claim 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 John Paul II has asserted, our Lord «is an insuperable testimony of patient loving and humble gentleness». His unlimited condescension 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 unforgiven, 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 Terese of Jesus when she was leading her sisters closer to holiness.

Let us not, therefore, be surprised 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.