

Sunday 10th (B) in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mk 3,20-35): They went home. The crowd began to gather again and they couldn't even have a meal. Knowing what was happening his relatives came to take charge of him: «He is out of his mind», they said.

The teachers of the Law who had come from Jerusalem said, «He is possessed by Beelzebub: the chief of the demons helps him to drive out demons». Jesus called them to him and began teaching them by means of stories or parables, «How can Satan drive out Satan? If a nation is divided by civil war, that nation cannot stand. If a family divides itself into groups, that family will not survive. In the same way, if Satan has risen against himself and is divided, he will not stand; he is finished. No one can break into the house of the Strong one in order to plunder his goods, unless he first ties up the Strong one. Then indeed, he can plunder his house. Truly, I say to you, every sin will be forgiven humankind, even insults to God, however numerous. But whoever slanders the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven: he carries the guilt of his sin forever». This was their sin when they said, «He has an evil spirit in him».

Jesus' mother and brothers came. As they stood outside, they sent someone to call him. The crowd sitting around Jesus told him, «Your mother and your brothers are outside asking for you». He replied, «Who are my mother and my brothers?». And looking around at those who sat there he said, «Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother to me».

«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 teachers of the Law who had come from Jerusalem said, ‘He is possessed by Beelzebub...’» (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, as we can notice it, Jesus is not accused because he broke the Law, or the Jewish customs, or the Sabbath. It is not a blasphemy either. 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 different from breaking a Jewish Law.

But the interesting fact is the answer Jesus gave them: «How can Satan drive out Satan? If a nation is divided by civil war, that nation cannot stand (...). No one can break into the house of the Strong one in order to plunder his goods, unless he first ties up the Strong one...» (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 parable about the house of the strong man. In a way or another, 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 newspaper and we 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?».

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.