

Friday's Gospel: Recognizing Jesus Passing By

Gospel for Friday in the 27th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 11:15-26*)

When Jesus had driven out a demon, some of the crowd said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons”; while others, to test him, sought from him a sign from heaven.

But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan

also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoil. He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.

“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest; and finding none he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and

brings seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.”

Commentary

The Gospel for today’s liturgy shows us the Master in the midst of the crowd after teaching his disciples, with the *Our Father*, how God’s sons and daughters should pray. Our Lord’s words, apparently so simple and filled with supernatural truth, do not always fall on the good ground that enables them to bear fruit.

Today we see how Jesus’ opponents don’t know how to or don’t want to open their hearts to his teaching; they misinterpret what he says and seek to put him in a bad light. By doing so, they ended up with an attitude completely opposed to what

Jesus wanted. Our Lord had taught people to pray by asking for the arrival of the Kingdom of God (11:2); instead they think he represents the kingdom of Satan. The sons and daughters of God should humbly ask to be freed from temptation (11:4); instead they don't stop putting Jesus to the test, following the lead of the tempter Satan. Jesus taught people to ask God to forgive their sins (11:4), while his opponents insistently accuse him of the grave sin of serving Beelzebul. Our Lord urged people to ask the Father for the Holy Spirit (11:13), but they insist on asking for a sign from heaven, and fail to recognize it when it is right before their eyes.

To be able to recognize our Lord, we need to keep the eyes of our heart clean. And to do so we need to ask God humbly for his help, since no one is exempt from blindness and the inability to recognize God's

presence, as we see in today's Gospel. The kingdom of Satan is the kingdom of the strong man, who has trapped men and women in the hardness of heart that prevents them from recognizing our Lord's message.

Pope Francis said: "The phrase of Saint Augustine comes to mind: *Timeo Iesum transeuntem* (Serm., 88, 14, 13), 'I am afraid that the Lord will pass by' and that I'll fail to recognize him, that the Lord will pass by me in one of these small, needy persons and I won't realize it is Jesus. I am afraid that the Lord will pass by and I won't recognize him! I have asked myself why Saint Augustine said we should fear that Jesus may pass by. Unfortunately, the answer lies in our behavior: because we are often distracted, indifferent, and when the Lord passes us by close to us, we lose the opportunity to encounter Him" (Pope Francis, General

Audience, Wednesday, October 12, 2016).

The final verses in today's Gospel can help us to avoid this hardness and blindness of heart. Jesus' words speak about filling our life with the light and strength of the Holy Spirit, striving to stay close to the Paraclete, listening to his inspirations, sharing affections, dialoguing, praying. The presence of God's Love in our soul is what enables us to overcome the strong man and to have our heart always open to recognizing our Lord wherever he passes by.

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