

11. March 2021

**“A stronger one has come”**

*Lk 11:14-23*

*He was driving out a devil and it was dumb; and it happened that when the devil had gone out the dumb man spoke, and the people were amazed. But some of them said, 'It is through Beelzebul, the prince of devils, that he drives devils out. 'Others asked him, as a test, for a sign from heaven; but, knowing what they were thinking, he said to them, 'Any kingdom which is divided against itself is heading for ruin, and house collapses against house. So, too, with Satan: if he is divided against himself, how can his kingdom last? - since you claim that it is through Beelzebul that I drive devils out.*

*Now if it is through Beelzebul that I drive devils out, through whom do your own sons drive them out? They shall be your judges, then. But if it is through the finger of God that I drive devils out, then the kingdom of God has indeed caught you unawares. So long as a strong man fully armed guards his own home, his goods are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than himself attacks and defeats him, the stronger man takes away all the weapons he relied on and shares out his spoil. 'Anyone who is not with me is against me; and anyone who does not gather in with me throws away.*

This theme of the devil appears quite often in the Holy Scriptures of the New Covenant, because Jesus came to destroy the “works of the devil” (*cf. 1 Jn 3:8*). Thus the ministry of deliverance is part of the ministry of the Church, for the devil still works on earth and tries to bring man under his control and influence. He must be decisively opposed by the power of the Lord.

In today's Gospel the Lord makes it clear to us that in the battle with Satan He is the Stronger. “*But if it is through the finger of God that I drive devils out, then the kingdom of God has indeed caught you unawares.*”

It is important for us to know this! The battle with Satan is not a fight between two opponents of equal strength with an open end. It is instead the realisation of Jesus' victory over hell and death (*cf. 1 Cor 15:55*). Satan is a fallen angel who, in his arrogance, rebelled against God in order to no longer serve but to rule himself. Even though he is a high angel and has been endowed with the corresponding gifts

by God, he is, however, only a creature; i.e. he owes his existence to God like all other creatures! It is also God who keeps him alive!

He possesses this insight, but does not want to know about it, because this truth limits from the very beginning any delusion of omnipotence that arrogant spirits so easily fall into. We also encounter this phenomenon in human dictators who act as if they were not subject to mortality and would not one day have to appear before the judgment throne of God.

Jesus, on the other hand, is God himself and therefore all spirits are fundamentally subjected to him!

Now when the kingdom of God comes with him to mankind, then the stronger comes and the darkness must give way.

Even if the power of Satan is objectively fundamentally broken, just as the redemption of man objectively took place through the suffering and death of Christ, this still has to be realised in man.

To remain in the image of the Gospel: We must let the stronger householder guard our house. As long as we are under sin, the fallen angel with his demons has considerable influence. With true conversion, a stronger one moves in and now guards the house!

In spite of this fundamental security that we may experience through the coming of Jesus, the struggle remains. The devil tries to regain the "lost ground". Even after Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, when the Lord had rejected him three times, the Scripture says: "*...the devil left him, until the opportune moment.*" (Lk 4:13)

This means that he will always try to gain influence and we must expect that. Our "house" must never be left unguarded, as if there were no enemies.

With the last sentence of the text we are given a task: "*Anyone who is not with me is against me; and anyone who does not gather in with me throws away.*"

The formulation is unambiguous. It is part of our task as Christians to bear witness to the faith and to make it fruitful. This is not simply optional for us! We cannot understand faith merely as a kind of personal philosophy that warms our hearts and enlightens our minds. With the acceptance of faith we are called together with the Lord to bring light into the world and thus snatch the prey from Satan. With him

we are to gather people into the net of love which the Lord has cast out for people (*cf. Mt 4:19*).

Conversely, it also means that we scatter if we do not do this! If our life does not become a testimony for Christ, then we are withholding something essential from people! They then remain in dispersion, perhaps even in the power of darkness, when we should have been the very ones to bear witness of God!

So we understand, faith becomes a commitment of love to gather with the Lord.

This is easily understood when we think of a person who is very hungry - perhaps he is almost starving. But we fail to give him food, although it was in front of our eyes and we could have helped!

It is the same with the transmission of faith. People are hungry for it in their souls, even though they may not notice it as much as the person who is physically hungry. They must at least receive the offer of faith - it is then their decision whether to accept it!

May the Lord protect our house and the house of His Church. May he give us the zeal to gather with him!