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Signs of the Kingdom of God

Lk 4:38-44

'Leaving the synagogue he went to Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in the grip of a high fever and they asked him to do something for her. Standing over her he rebuked the fever and it left her. And she immediately got up and began to serve them. At sunset all those who had friends suffering from diseases of one kind or another brought them to him, and laying his hands on each he cured them. Devils too came out of many people, shouting, 'You are the Son of God.' But he warned them and would not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Christ. When daylight came he left the house and made his way to a lonely place. The crowds went to look for him, and when they had caught up with him they wanted to prevent him leaving them, but he answered, 'I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns too, because that is what I was sent to do.' And he continued his proclamation in the synagogues of Judaea.'

How healing is the presence of the Lord for all men! Whether it was Peter's mother-in-law, or the many sick who were brought before the Lord, all were healed. For the people it was palpable that the Kingdom of God was present. They must have experienced something like a notion of a paradisiacal state, in which sickness and death did not exist yet. Now another Kingdom was emerging, which would not be subject to decay or under the dominion of death.

Indeed, in Jesus the Kingdom of God had come to mankind, but it had not yet reached its consummation. The Lord still awaited the road that would lead him to Golgotha and lead to his glorious Resurrection; and the pilgrim Church still had before it its mission to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth.

For the demons the hour of judgment had come. They, who had been expelled from heaven and had rushed down to earth (Rev 12:7-9); they, who want to continue their struggle against God here on earth (Rev 12:17), know that their definitive end is at hand (Rev 20:7-10).

"Have you come to destroy us?" the demons cry out to Jesus in another biblical passage (Mk 1:24). In today's Gospel passage, on the other hand, they confess loudly, "You are the Son of God." But Jesus does not allow them to speak. He does not want his identity to be revealed by the demons, who hate and fear him.

Instead, it is the Holy Spirit and the disciples who are to bear witness to Jesus in love and truth. It is to them that men must listen, in order to be convinced by the message of the Gospel.

Therefore I give you a word of advice: let us not occupy ourselves more than necessary with the Devil; and let us not allow ourselves to be impressed by the negative fascination he exerts. This fascination can be hidden even under religious pretexts. We might believe, for example, that it is necessary to know more about the Devil's plans in order to be able to fight him better. Nor should we be eager to hear the messages that might be heard during an exorcism. We can never forget that a demon, even if he is forced to speak the truth, will not speak it as a beloved child of God, but as a demon.

In today's Gospel, we hear that the people who had received so much help and healing from the Lord, wanted to prevent him from leaving. And it is understandable that they wanted him to stay with them! However, Jesus wants to fulfill His Father's mission: the gospel of the Kingdom of God must be proclaimed!

Jesus cannot be held back, because, as St. Paul will later say and all missionaries will feel, it is a "duty of love" that weighs on him (cf. 1 Cor 9:16). They cannot stop and settle in this life until the Gospel has reached everywhere. They are obedient to the One who sent them, who is the Heavenly Father.

The proclamation of the gospel always has a certain urgency, which cannot be confused with haste or a kind of stress to convert everyone, nor a false sense of obligation.... Rather, this urgency comes from the gift of piety, which seeks to please the Heavenly Father and hastens to fulfill His commission. This same piety is also awakened when we look at the people who have yet to be touched by the Good News, so that they may be redeemed and thus be able to lead a life in communion with God, and not remain in darkness.

This urgency existed at the time of Jesus, was maintained throughout the centuries and continues to be valid today, as we draw ever closer to the Second Coming of the Lord at the End of Time.