

13. October 2023

A stronger had to come!

Lk 11:14-26

Jesus 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. When an unclean spirit goes out of someone it wanders through waterless country looking for a place to rest, and not finding one it says, "I will go back to the home I came from." But on arrival, finding it swept and tidied, it then goes off and brings seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and set up house there, and so that person ends up worse off than before.'

Jesus does not leave us in any doubt about the existence of the powers of darkness. Any attempt to reduce this dark reality to a mere symbol representing evil is erroneous and misleading. The fallen angels we call demons do exist and can possess or strongly influence people. They are not always as obvious as in today's Gospel account or in other passages where the casting out of demons is accompanied by concrete signs, such as loud cries (cf. Mk 1:23-25).

Often the influence of demons is much more subtle. Their aim is always to lead the person away from God and into sin. All the efforts of these hostile forces have this aim: to involve the person in their own rebellion against the Lord.

In their blindness, demons are incapable of loving God and seek to destroy everything that bears His image. Since it is He who called everything into existence, the hatred of the fallen angels is directed against everything created, because the testimony of God is inscribed in all creation, if only one has eyes to see.

Man is created in the image and likeness of God and is therefore an eminent witness of Him. Every soul reflects the glory of God, and some mystics speak of the joy of the Lord when He sees the soul that He has created. Perhaps we can understand this a little when we see a little child whose very presence gives us joy, even if it is not our own.

Then, being aware of this dark reality at work in the world - which is by no means omnipotent - we can better understand the things that are happening... The violence against unborn children; the gender ideology that attacks the sacred order of creation of male and female; so many forms of injustice; the anti-Christian mentality that is spreading. All of this, among much else, is not simply human error; it is enmity against God, sown by demonic forces that take advantage of people's evil inclinations to draw them into cooperation with them, even if people are often not conscious of it.

But today's Gospel text also points to the solution: Somebody stronger must come, and the stronger is the Lord Himself! He takes away the prey of the devil, and the powers of darkness are bound by His Word.

When we consciously hand over the reins of our lives to the Lord and abide in His leading, every area of our being will be permeated by Him.

The Holy Spirit will remove anything that may still be the result of a dark dominion in us. He will also help us to overcome our disordered inclinations, the effects of original sin, so that the demons will not find anything in us that they can exploit to their advantage.

If, with the Lord's help, we consciously enter the battle and resist the powers of darkness wherever we perceive them, then the light of God will spread. And this will not just be on a personal level, for this battle is not just about us. With our prayer we can achieve great things and not just defend ourselves against the powers of darkness.

The name of our Lord is a terror to the demonic powers! When we invoke it, they are confronted with the One who is stronger, and so they are weakened.

In this regard, I recommend that you listen to my talk on "Spiritual Warfare":
<https://youtu.be/UjivpXNTAQU?feature=shared>