

9. June 2024

Accusations against Jesus

Mk 3:20-35

He went home again, and once more such a crowd collected that they could not even have a meal. When his relations heard of this, they set out to take charge of him; they said, 'He is out of his mind.' The scribes who had come down from Jerusalem were saying, 'Beelzebul is in him,' and, 'It is through the prince of devils that he drives devils out.' So he called them to him and spoke to them in parables, 'How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot last. And if a household is divided against itself, that household can never last. Now if Satan has rebelled against himself and is divided, he cannot last either - it is the end of him. But no one can make his way into a strong man's house and plunder his property unless he has first tied up the strong man. Only then can he plunder his house. 'In truth I tell you, all human sins will be forgiven, and all the blasphemies ever uttered; but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, but is guilty of an eternal sin.' This was because they were saying, 'There is an unclean spirit in him.' Now his mother and his brothers arrived and, standing outside, sent in a message asking for him. A crowd was sitting round him at the time the message was passed to him, 'Look, your mother and brothers and sisters are outside asking for you.' He replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking at those sitting in a circle round him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother.'

“He is out of his mind” and “Beelzebul is in Him”... These are the reactions we hear today to the proclamation and the works of Jesus. The first comes from His relatives, who wanted to take Him away by force. The second comes from the scribes, who wanted to show Jesus as someone who was in alliance with dark powers.

Why does the Lord's mission provoke such reactions?

On the human level, it must have been the incomprehensibility of the Person of Jesus and His ministry. His relatives knew Him and were accustomed to a natural relationship with Him. But when Jesus' public life began, they were confronted with a totally

unexpected situation. Somehow, they must have seen Him as something strange and probably felt worried and perhaps also a little threatened. Therefore, they did not draw the right conclusions from Jesus' actions and tried to assert "family rights" to "take charge of Him". Even if this was not their intention, their lack of understanding brought the relatives into a kind of complicity with the scribes in order to remove Jesus from His mission. This reminds us of Peter, who also wanted to prevent Jesus from going to Jerusalem (cf. Mt 16:22-23).

The scribes, on the other hand, went so far as to put the works of Jesus in a diabolical context. They pretended that it was Beelzebul who was behind the expulsion of the evil spirits, and with such statements they entangled themselves in an obvious contradiction: *"There is an unclean spirit in Him."* But the Lord's answer unmasks their contradiction: *"How can Satan drive out Satan?"* Thus, He clearly demonstrates the absurdity of such statements. However, they are not only absurd, but also very dangerous. It is not for nothing that the Lord utters in this context these stern words: *"In truth I tell you, all human sins will be forgiven, and all the blasphemies ever uttered; but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, but is guilty of an eternal sin"*.

In the face of the absurd and wicked accusations of the scribes, Jesus gives us wise instruction. If the evil spirits are to be driven back, then the power of God is at work and manifesting itself (cf. Lk 11:20). On the other hand, if the contrary is affirmed - that is, that it is the evil spirit itself that is at work - then one is not only denying the work of God, but also going against reason: *"If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot last. And if a household is divided against itself, that household can never last"*.

Jesus' relatives also receive a wise lesson from the Lord. He does not accede to their family's claim, nor does He interrupt His mission because of their concern and incomprehension. On the contrary, with His words He opens the way to a universal spiritual family. All those who do the will of the Father are part of it. God Himself, through His Son, calls people into this communion of the children of God. And here the natural bonds have to take a back seat for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus knows how to deal with situations that want to prevent Him from fulfilling His Father's will. This is always first and foremost! Everything else will have to be subordinated to it... Thus, the Lord points out to us the essential: God first!