

HOM 25th Sunday B 2021 Sept 19

Today's first reading provides an insight into the minds and hearts of those who sought to do away with Jesus. As we heard:

The wicked say: Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us; he sets himself against our doings, reproaches us for transgressions of the law.

Does that not also sound like what the enemies of the Church say today when the Church upholds the truth about the right use of sexuality and the right to life of unborn babies and so on? That's because, in the end, the Church must go the way of Christ, as the Catechism teaches. Those set on their own will instead of God's, will conspire to do away with Christ's Mystical Body just as they conspired to do away with Christ.

It may be helpful to recall here something about Judas that happened at the Last Supper as recounted in John's Gospel (13: 26-27). The Apostles wanted to know which one was the betrayer of whom Jesus spoke. We read:

Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I hand the morsel after I have dipped it.' So He dipped the morsel and handed it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. After he took the morsel, Satan entered him.

The point I wish to make is that just as the Evil One was involved in the betrayal, persecution, and Death of Jesus, so will the Evil One be involved in the betrayal, persecution and death of the Church. And just as Jesus' betrayal and crucifixion was both an inside job and an outside job, so will the crucifixion and death of the Church be an inside job and an outside job. In other words, the enemies of the Church will be both inside the Church and outside the Church and both will be urged on in their enmity toward the Church by the Devil who operates in various ways in His rebellion toward God and hatred of Man.

Theologian Raymond De Souza explains several levels of attempted engagement by the Devil about which we should be aware. *Temptation* is the Devil's least intrusive attempt to engage a person in turning from God's will. It's like the Devil trying to get a person to join in mental dialogue about doing something that is opposed to God's will while the person remains completely free to choose.

Oppression, Souza says, is when the Devil bombards a person with an assault of temptations or provocations to try to break down the person's spiritual defenses. *Obsession* takes place when that person's defenses have been breached by the Evil One and the person is now beset by overwhelming sinful inclinations with little power to resist what is against God's will; his freedom is impaired.

Finally, demonic *possession* is when the Enemy has fully entered a person and taken control of his soul and body. This is rather rare and is by invitation only, although there can be exceptions as when God allows it involuntarily for a greater good, such as in the case of several saints, who

were possessed for brief periods. But in general, the Devil has no power over someone who lives in God's grace and is striving to love God and neighbor. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes the soul of that person a spiritual stronghold that demonic evil cannot penetrate unless the person allows it.

To prevent envy, jealousy, and other sins of disordered desire for pleasure, wealth or power that St. James writes about in our second reading, we must live in God's grace, be constantly prayerful, and be spiritually on guard against promptings of the Devil who is envious of Man and seeks our ruin.

Additionally, we will do very well to seek and embrace the Cross of obedience and love in oneness with Jesus. That is the ultimate antidote for sin. That's what puts the Devil to flight. That's what produces a pure heart, constancy in charity, peaceable-ness, mercy, and ultimately, leads to eternal blessedness.

Jesus' disciples in today's Gospel reading do not yet understand this, and were not ready to learn more about it. They were afraid to ask. Even the Twelve preferred arguing among themselves about who was the greatest rather than talking about who was willing to go the way of the Cross with Jesus.

So, Our Lord tells them that true greatness requires them to be the servants of all, including the lowliest and the least, represented by a child whom the Lord places in their midst with a hug. Jesus, then later offering Himself unto the Cross as a ransom for many, will give them the example, not only of serving the least, but of voluntarily becoming the lowest and the least themselves in service to others.

But no one does this readily or without divine help. Only after the Apostles received the grace of the Holy Spirit Jesus poured out to them, did they understand and join in Jesus' saving service – His self-offering to the Father's will unto the Cross – for the life of the willing.

And keep in mind that Jesus' self-offering to the Father began long before He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of His Blessed Mother. His self-offering to the Father is from all eternity before the creation of angels and the universe and Man and all living things. And it is brought to full realization within time, unto the Cross, as He offers Himself for the salvation of all whom the Father loves.

What is so beautiful about this is that Jesus also offers us oneness with Himself in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, so that we can do what He did – so that we can offer ourselves to the Father's will in advance of all that lay ahead for us. He offers us oneness with Himself so that we can be humble servants in His likeness AND share forever in His divine glory. Isn't that awesome? Did you catch the words for the Gospel Acclamation: *God has called us through the Gospel to possess the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

But the reward begins here and now. Blessed are we here and now if we are poor in spirit – if we give all we can to Church and charity; blessed are we here and now if we mourn the growing evil enveloping the world and the Church; blessed are we here and now if we are meek rather than

envious or self-willed, if we seek what is right in God's eye's for ourselves and others, if we are merciful in offering ourselves for the true good of others, especially their eternal good, if we are clean of heart – our faces set like flint on God's will; blessed are we here and now if we are peacemakers and not trouble-makers; blessed are we here and now if we are insulted and persecuted even unto death for remaining faithful to Christ.

Even here and now, brothers and sisters, there is nothing that satisfies like friendship with Jesus or that brings greater blessing than consummate nuptial oneness with Him in His saving oblation.

I invite you to experience this for yourself by praying these words silently and sincerely with me at Holy Communion: I AM ALL YOURS O MOST LOVING JESUS THROUGH MARY YOUR MOTHER...with the help of St. Joseph.