

Jesus' authority over the force of evil: 4th Sunday-Ordinary

In today's Gospel, we find a man with an unclean spirit in the midst of people in a synagogue, supposedly a holy place; but there is this man consumed by the evil force, possessed with unclean spirit in a holy place.

Was he a regular attendee of that synagogue? May be. Can we think that demons hold membership in the church, sit in the pews and sometimes stand behind pulpits?

One of the great Christian writers, C.S. Lewis had this to say about the devil: "*We make two mistakes regarding the devil. One is to have an unhealthy interest in him. The other is to deny that he exists. With both, Satan is equally happy.*"

It's impossible to ignore the existence of the devil and his works in and around us. Abuse, disease, racism, hatred, violence, discrimination, murder, broken hearts, and broken homes – everything that is bad. His work is everything that causes us to act less than human, everything that distorts the image of God in which we are created. It shows that he still exists and is active in and around us.

Today's Gospel invites us to ask ourselves: How are demons seeking to destroy our life and the life of our loved ones? In what ways are we being attacked? Is there an evil power which is controlling some aspects of our life? How do we overcome it?

A grandpa was teaching his grandson about life, saying:

"A fight is going on inside me. It is a terrible fight, and it is between two wolves. One wolf is evil, which is anger, hatred, resentment, frustration, envy, greed, arrogance, pride, ego, and guilt. The other is good, which is joy, peace, love, hope, humility, kindness, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith." The grandson asked: "Which wolf will win, grandpa?" Grandpa replied, "The one I feed."

We all carry two wolves, the evil one and the holy one. They are in a constant battle. Who will win? Depends on who gets well fed.

It's easier to feed the evil one. It's easier to complain, ignore, be angry and give up. There is almost no effort required to do those things.

In the first reading from the Book of Deuteronomy, we come across a stern warning to the people of Israel. Even after feeding them with manna in the desert and giving them clean drinking water from the flinty rock, they were still pursuing other gods. They were grumbling, complaining, and often giving up the One, True and Holy God.

We are the new Israel. How faithful are we? Are we able to count our daily blessings and be grateful to God?

As we pray in today's Psalm, do we listen to voice of the Lord and not harden our hearts? Do we listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us? Do we allow ourselves to be inspired, strengthened and led by the Holy Spirit?

When Jesus entered the synagogue and started teaching, the man with unclean spirit cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. Have you come to destroy us?" It sounds like even the devil knows how powerful the presence of Jesus and His teachings are.

How often do we read the Word of God and strengthen ourselves? Do we believe that the Word of God has the power to destroy evil?

Let us search into God's Word today. What all of us need to hear more than anything else is the powerful authority of Jesus ordering out the evil. Jesus commanded the evil spirit to come out. And he came out.

There is a power at work in this world greater than all evil, and that is the power of God, that is shown to us in Jesus Christ. Let the Word of God and the Bread of Life nourish us and strengthen us to cast out the unclean spirit. If we possess the Holy Spirit, evil spirit won't be able to possess us. He will have no power over us, Amen.