

10th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year: B

Gen 3.9-15; 2 Cor 4.13-5.1; Mk 3.20-35

Crawling Sinfulness

Antoine Yates lived in New York City and for some inexplicable reason brought home a 2-month-old tiger cub and later an alligator. It's not clear where he found them. But they were with him for two years — in his apartment. What was a little tiger cub, became a 500 pound Bengal tiger monstrosity. It was inevitable. The police got a call about a “dog” bite and when they got to the 19-story public housing apartment building, they discovered Yates in the lobby with injuries to his right arm and leg. Someone alerted them of the possibility of a “wild animal” at his apartment. A fourth-floor resident complained that urine had seeped through her ceiling from Yates’ apartment. When they arrived, the police peered through a hole and saw the huge cat prowling around in the apartment. To make a long story short, it took a contingent of officers at the door, and some rappelling from the roof to use a dart gun to bring this animal under control. When they entered the apartment, they found the big cat lying atop some newspapers. The alligator was nearby. Both animals were relocated to shelters. As for Yates, he missed the tiger, demonstrating that's it's possible to be in love with the very things that can kill you. That is what happens to those who entertain temptations in the form of evil thoughts and desires, evil habits and addictions.

Blaming God

The man, instead of acknowledging his sinfulness, that he has disobeyed God, tries to shift the blame and in doing so blames God Himself: If God hadn't given him the woman, this never would have happened. Why does God approach the man first? After all, the woman was the first to eat (Genesis 3.6). Before God made the woman, He had put the man in the garden to work and to keep it (Genesis 2.15). The Hebrew word (shammar) translated as “keep” can also be translated as “guard” (keep safe). After this commission, God commands the man not to eat of the tree. If he was to guard the garden, he must guard

everything and everyone in it, including his companion; and there must be something to guard against. The man failed to keep the serpent from influencing his wife and himself; and he had only one command to obey: Do not eat of the tree.

The Story of Sin

The LORD God then asked the woman, "Why did you do such a thing?"

Having not obtained an admittance of sinfulness from the man, God turns to the woman, asking her to look at the cause of what she had done. The woman answered, "The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it." The command not to eat had been given to the man before the woman was created. The man had instructed the woman, but she did not heed his direction but chose instead to listen to the serpent. She had chosen the serpent over her husband; a form of adultery. Remember that the Holy Scripture is all about covenant family. She ate with the serpent rather than with her husband. She had communion with the sinner.

Then the Lord God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, you shall be banned from all the animals and from all the wild creatures; on your belly shall you crawl, and dirt shall you eat all the days of your life.

The devil will not have influence over any of God's creation except man (who was made from dirt). The only example we have in Holy Scripture of demonic possession of animals is in Matthew 8.30-32 (Mk 5.11-13; Lk 8.32-33) where demons enter a herd of swine who then commit suicide rather than be possessed.

The Lord then said, I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heel."

Have all women (or men, for that matter) had total separation/rejection between them and Satan? Obviously not, but the woman was sinless until this event and her name is changed to Eve as a result (Gen 3.20). There has been sparring between the devil and mankind ever since. Total enmity occurred when another sinless woman came along; a woman whose own son referred to her as woman as a sign of respect - The Blessed Virgin Mary.

Paul to the Corinthians

During ordinary time in Cycle B, the second letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians is proclaimed immediately after Easter. We will hear from 2 Corinthians for five weeks.

Saint Paul established a Christian community at Corinth during his second missionary journey (A.D. 50-52), spending about one and one-half years there aided by Silas and Timothy. About a year after Paul left, the city was visited by Apollos, a brilliant preacher and also briefly by Saint Peter. Some two years later some Christian Jews from Palestine arrived; people who Saint Paul calls false apostles (2 Cor 11.13). This bad influence prompted Saint Paul to write his first letter to the Corinthians. The false apostles twisted what Saint Paul said in his first letter; accusing him of being all talk, irresponsible, and ambitious pointing out that he had not returned to Corinth. This caused Saint Paul to write this second letter, probably near the end of 57 AD or in early 58, in preparation for his visit which will come after his visit to Macedonia.

Since, then, we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we too believe and therefore speak,

Saint Paul quotes the Septuagint (Greek) translation of Psalm 116.10. The Hebrew reads I believed, even when I said. In either language, faith is the cause of knowing that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and place us with you in his presence.

In Saint Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, one of the questions he answered was the reality of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15). Here, he announces that the resurrection is the reason for his hope. Implied in this statement is that Saint Paul did not expect to be alive on the last day.

Greek philosophers looked at the body as a prison of the soul; but Saint Paul doesn't share this belief as this would mean that we would be forever disembodied spirits. The Greek word translated as a 'dwelling' was used especially for the temple. God will provide us with a sacred body, not the result of natural process but of God's resurrection.

The Role of Jesus

Mark' gospel begins with John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. After His temptation in the desert (which occupies two verses), Jesus sets out to call His disciples; working miracles around the Sea of Galilee. Our reading for today occurs immediately after Jesus appoints the twelve apostles. Jesus has returned to Nazareth. Again (the) crowd gathered, making it impossible for them even to eat.

Literally, those around him which could mean friends, family, relatives or household heard of this and they set out to seize him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." This is equivalently an accusation of demonic possession. His family wants to take control of Jesus lest He embarrass them. Mary is apparently with the family members as we hear at the end of this reading (verses 32-35).

The scribes who had come from Jerusalem

The King of Demons

A new set of opponents come on the scene. said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul,". Beelzebul means lord of the dwelling or baal the prince. Translations from the Vulgate have Beelzebub which means lord of the flies. Beelzebub is not found in the Greek manuscripts. Nowhere in pre-Christian literature is Beelzebul identified with a demon, although he is clearly identified here as such; and "by the prince of demons he drives out demons." Summoning them, he began to speak to them in parables, "How can Satan drive out Satan?

Satan vs. Satan

Jesus is arguing that His exorcisms do indeed signal the collapse of Satan's rule, but some power other than a demon is needed to explain His works, since Satan is not so foolish as to destroy his own works.

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand; that is the

end of him. But no one can enter a strong man's house to plunder his property unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house.

Jesus Conquers Satan

Jesus has entered Satan's house, put him under restraint, and is now plundering his household by performing exorcisms. Not only is Jesus not on Satan's side, He is his enemy.

A Mention has been made of the unclean spirit whom the Lord shows to be divided against himself. The Holy Spirit, however, is not divided against himself. Rather He makes those whom He gathers together undivided against themselves, by dwelling within those who have been cleansed, that they may be like those of whom it is written in the Acts of the Apostles (4.32).

Amen, I say to you, an oath. He is telling the truth. all sins and all blasphemies that people utter will be forgiven them. All sins (including murder, unchastity, and apostasy) can be forgiven. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin."

Sin against the Holy Spirit

The fact that all sins can be forgiven should not be overlooked by excessive concentration on the exception. There are actually four sins against the Holy Spirit:

- Despair concerning the possibility of salvation.
- Presumption of God's mercy and forgiveness.
- Denial of the truths of faith.
- Final impenitence and refusal to turn to God.
-

For they had said, "He has an unclean spirit." The sin in this exchange is the failure to discern the Holy Spirit in Jesus' ministry. His mother and his brothers arrived.

In Hebrew parlance, a cousin or other close relative is a brother or sister. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him. A crowd seated around him told him, "Your mother and your brothers (and your sisters) are outside asking for you." But he said to them in reply, "Who are my mother and (my) brothers?"

And looking around at those seated in the circle he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. (For) whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Practical Conclusion

In Jewish society, family relationships are extremely important. The family took its meals together and aided one another. **Jesus uses this concept of family to cause his followers to judge their relationships in the light of the criterion of the Father's will.** The reign of God makes demands on the personal commitment of a disciple, which must transcend at times all natural bonds of family or ethnic grouping. We are invited to invite all and exclude none from our quest for God's kingdom.