

III LENT 2015

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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EPHESIANS 5.1 ST. LUKE 11.14

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Jesus heals a man who could not speak. The man spoke clearly. It is an amazing miracle. For his efforts...Jesus is accused of being an agent for Beelzebub...the Chief Devil...the *Lord of the Flies*.

We first read about Beelzebub in the Second Book of Kings. King Ahaziah of Israel falls off a balcony and is seriously injured. Instead of asking God to heal him...he consults the priests of Beelzebub. The prophet Elijah tells Ahaziah he will not recover from his injuries and will die...because he didn't trust God to heal him.

Restoring health and wholeness is God's trademark. The Old Testament is full of accounts of God healing people directly and through his prophets. Jesus tells his accusers if they think his power to heal comes from Satan...they must make the same accusation against their own people...against their own prophets.

To show just how ridiculous their charge is...Jesus goes on to say a country divided into warring factions will not last very long...a family divided will eventually fall apart...Satan is not going to work against himself...that would truly be crazy!

In his 1954 novel *Lord of the Flies*, William Golding graphically depicts what happens to a group of English schoolboys stranded on a deserted island. The boys survive a plane crash in which all the adults are killed. Their initial efforts at forming a society based on reason and cooperation are quickly replaced by irrational fear, self-interests and unspeakable brutality. It is a house divided heading toward annihilation.

The boys become obsessed with a "Beast" whose physical manifestation is the fly-covered remains of a pig's head...their *Lord of the Flies*. Only one boy understands the truth behind the pig's head and the way it has deceived the boys. He wants to see peace and order restored. For his efforts...he is killed in an act of mob violence. Sound familiar...think Jesus and Good Friday. Redemption comes for the boys only when adults appear to rescue them.

Most of the world's religions understand the concepts of light and dark as having something to do with good and evil. In many religions the role of human beings is to find ways of maintaining a balance between light and dark...good and evil...so neither has the upper hand. Light and dark...good and evil become equal partners in the drama of human existence.

Jesus makes it clear Satan will never get the upper hand...there is no balance of power. God's Kingdom has already arrived and that means Beelzebub...the *Lord of the Flies*...has already lost the war. Satan wants no part of God's Kingdom...through his lies and deception he tries to get us to do the same... he wants us embrace the coldness of darkness and death...not the warmth and light and life that is Jesus.

Hollywood gives us a fantastic and false idea of the way Beelzebub operates. He does not have to resort to pyrotechnics and visual effects to get our attention. The Devil loves to play mind games with us...his specialty. All he has to do is to try to get us to engage in the kind of "dark" behavior Paul talks about and think God doesn't see what we're doing. Like the boys on the island...we have two choices...darkness or light...death or life...we want to be honest with God and others and walk in the Light.

The Last Gospel, the first fourteen verses from Saint John's Gospel, which is read at the conclusion of every Mass, tells us Jesus is the Word who is the source of life, and this life brings light to humankind. Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never put the light out. Jesus has made certain, once and for all time, darkness has been cancelled out by light...death has been replaced by life everlasting.

Jesus heals our minds, bodies and souls. He gives us the power of his Holy Spirit to bring order to our lives in an increasingly disordered world...so we keep our guard up and not be fooled and overcome by Beelzebub...the *Lord of the Flies*.

This is Good News...to be heard and spoken clearly about...not just during Lent...always.

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