

III LENT 2016

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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EPHESIANS 5.1 ST. LUKE 11.14

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Lord of the Flies is the title of William Golding's 1954 dystopian novel about a group of English schoolboys who find themselves stuck on an uninhabited island in the South Pacific after their plane crashes. All of the adults on the plane are killed in the crash.

The literal translation of the Greek word *dystopia* is *not a good place*. A dystopia can be described as a community or society that is undesirable or frightening and often characterized by dehumanization, totalitarian governments, corporate greed, environmental disasters, chaos and disorder.

The boys in Golding's novel are being evacuated to safety during a nuclear war. They realize they are in a precarious situation and try to form a society in which the common good prevails. Rules are made: everyone pitches in to find food and keep a fire burning at night so it can be seen by a passing ship and they can be rescued. The boys try to keep their island home in order.

Their society soon devolves into anarchy. They split into two opposing camps. The sensible boys try to keep the rules and maintain order. The other boys disregard all rules and order and turn to murder to get what they want. Some of the boys start believing in a "monster" living in the trees and a "beast" that attracts flies...the *Lord of the Flies*. Their island paradise has become a house divided and falling...it has become *not a good place*.

In the end the boys are rescued but only after several of them are killed. Confronted with the appearance of an adult naval officer, the boys stop fighting each other. The naval officer expresses disappointment the boys couldn't have behaved like "proper" British schoolboys and solve their problems. The novel closes with the naval officer glancing back at his own warship.

In today's Gospel, Jesus heals a man who could not speak. When the man begins to speak clearly, some of the bystanders accuse Jesus of being an agent for *Beelzebub*...the Chief Devil...Satan. *Beelzebub* first appears in

the Second Book of Kings. The literal translation of the name *Beelzebub* is *Lord of the Flies*.

Jesus answers the charge by asking them whose name they invoke when they go about healing people. God's business is healing people and restoring order. Satan is only interested in making people's lives miserable and disorder. It is truly dumb to think Satan would work against himself healing this man...an act that ultimately glorifies God.

A house divided...will not survive. Common sense tells us that. Satan will not work against himself to divide his own house but he loves to divide our houses...especially when we think we are impervious to his attacks or worse...we think our house is all cleaned up and we have nothing to worry about. Jesus tells two short stories to make the point we need to keep our defenses strong...

...We're strong and safe in our own house until someone stronger shows up and takes away everything we have and divides up what he stole. Satan will keep himself busy trying to wreck our lives...he succeeds in taking what we have...our hope...only if we let him in. God is stronger...and our only hope!

...It's at the point we have cleaned out the spiritual cobwebs from our hearts and minds and we think our lives are back in order we are the most vulnerable. Spending time during Lent getting rid of bad habits is not enough. They must be replaced by positive good habits. Otherwise, we may be inviting in more trouble.

Saint Paul tells us to walk like children of the Light...the Light that is Jesus. We follow Jesus and want to be seen for what we are...children of the Light...our work must always be open and honest and transparent.

Beelzebub...the *Lord of the Flies*...offers us nothing except darkness and death and a dystopian existence without hope. We want no part of him or his emptiness. But we cannot remain neutral when it comes to matters of our Faith...we must take positive action...that will ensure us we are in a good place...which is where we want to be.

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