

### III LENT 2019

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

**EPHESIANS 5.1-14 St. LUKE 11.14-28**

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*In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God and the Word was God...The Word was the source of life and this life brought light to people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out.*

The concepts of light and dark are common to most of the world's great religions. In many of these religions light and dark represent the forces of good and evil locked in a constant battle with each other in which neither has the advantage. The playing field between light and dark...good and evil...is leveled out so neither gets the upper hand. Light and dark...good and evil...are equal partners in the drama called human life...it's about balancing things out.

Christians have a different understanding of things. At the conclusion of every Sunday Mass the celebrant reads the Prologue to John's Gospel. The **Word** in the Gospel John talks about is **Jesus**...the Second Person of the Trinity...who has always existed with God. Jesus brings light into the world...his light is so intense darkness can never put it out.

Our source of light and life is Jesus. The source of darkness and death is the Devil. Jesus and Satan are not opposites...they are not equal partners trying to maintain a balance between good and evil. Jesus is God's Son...the Devil is not. In the end...good will always win the battle against evil.

The Devil is a central character in the Gospel readings for the first three Sundays in Lent. First he tries to get Jesus to do magic tricks in the desert. Last week he caused a mother grief by making her daughter sick. Today he prevents a man from speaking. Jesus heals the man and he begins to speak clearly.

It's an amazing miracle. But the people who witnessed the healing accuse Jesus of being an agent for Beelzebub...the Chief Devil...the *Lord of the Flies*...and of healing the man through Satan. It's a ridiculous charge.

We can imagine Jesus saying something like, "Seriously? Well that's just crazy. Why would

Satan fight against himself? That makes no sense at all...any more than a family or a country divided. Both will eventually collapse."

Jesus makes it clear Satan will never get the upper hand...there is no such thing as a balance of power between good and evil in Christianity. 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 reject God and his kingdom...he wants us to embrace the coldness of darkness and death...not the warmth and light and life that is Jesus.

Hollywood gives us a fantastic and largely false idea of the way Beelzebub operates. He usually doesn't have to resort to pyrotechnics and visual effects to get our attention. We don't need to see beds levitating or dishes flying across the room to believe the Devil exists. Just watch the evening news!

All Satan has to do is to try to get us to engage in the kind of "dark" behavior Paul talks about in today's Epistle. Instead...Paul tells us we must try to be like God...we are supposed to walk as children of the Light of Christ...to be known by the good works we do.

In the Gospel Jesus tells a short story about a man who has done some spiritual housecleaning. The "evil spirit" that had been bothering the man is gone. But it's at the very moment the man thinks he has regained total control over his life he leaves himself open to further attacks...he might find he has a lot more housecleaning to do.

We're supposed to be doing some spiritual house cleaning during Lent. If we place ourselves in the same position as the man in the Gospel story, we come to realize it's not enough for us to get rid of the negative things holding us down. Getting rid of our own "demons" in whatever form they take is only the first step. They must be replaced by positive good.

When we leave here today we must try to walk as Children of the Light...the Light that is Jesus. Let us embrace the Light of Christ...and the freedom it brings us to do God's work as we should.

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