

Homily for 10th Sunday

Evil is not easily rooted out of human life. The serpent raises its ugly head in many ways. Satan is alive and well, in the interminable conflicts of our world, and in the gangs that ravage our cities with heroin, cocaine and other drugs. The old maxims are often vindicated by events. “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” As Edmund Burke once said: “For evil to triumph, it is enough that good men do nothing.” The threat of evil in human existence is deep and widespread. The Genesis text talks about the origin of evil — it comes both from outside man (as the Serpent-Tempter) and also from within. The human condition with its experience of disharmony in relationships with others and in our relationship with God is presented as a fall from the ideal, and this disharmony which is the essence of evil, is the result of sin. I have read about a Church where folks go so mad at each other that the Church split and then they fought over the property. Each group filed lawsuits against the other group. During a hearing, it was discovered that the conflict had begun years before at a church dinner (pause) when an elder was served a smaller piece of ham than the child seated next to him. Just as in the case of Adam and Eve, sin is never a private affair; it always has social implications, for others are affected.

In the second reading, Paul declares to the Corinthians that the many adversities of his missionary work were God’s plan for his spiritual growth; his sufferings, offered with Jesus for the Salvation of the world, would result a glorious reward for him and for all believers who did the same. Today’s Gospel passage reveals how Jesus himself was misunderstood by his own relatives and was criticized, slandered and rejected by the Sanhedrin-led scribes and Pharisees. The parable of Jesus about disharmony has a wider resonance than just a single household: a house divided cannot stand.

A sharp paradox of the human situation is that the more control we develop over the world and the more goods we can produce, the more the possibilities for evil proliferate too. This ambiguity is suggested in the text that says: “He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Human achievements are so often flawed; we can build our towers to the heavens but they become a Babel of confusion and races. What hope is there then for us? The Gospel provides a way forward. What was hinted at in Genesis came to its full revelation in the ministry of Jesus, who worked to fully overcome the power and influence of evil. What he revealed in action was God’s power restoring creation — healing women and men and making them whole again. From here on our humankind is no longer left on its own in a hopeless struggle against evil. It is now possible for us to share in the new creation, if we belong to Christ.

We need to have the courage of our convictions: Modern “liberal-minded” people may find genuine Christians’ belief in and practice of Christ’s ideas and ideals crazy too. Hence, what is needed in a Christian is the courage of his or her convictions based on the authority of Jesus as God and the truth of his doctrines. We need to live as members of God’s family. Hence, let us observe our obligations of treating others with love and respect and of sharing our love with them in corporal and spiritual works of mercy.