

Choose Your Camp

Sixth Sunday of Easter / Mother's Day Homily

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Jesus tells His disciples that if they want to continue to love Him, they need to keep His commandments.

But then Jesus says it will not be so for everyone.

Jesus predicts that there will be people in this world who do not know God, who will not accept the Spirit of Truth, who is the Holy Spirit. And because they do not know God, because they do not accept this Spirit of Truth, they will not love the Lord according to His commandments.

Jesus presents this as a sad reality.

He is also setting up what St. Ignatius of Loyola later developed into one of his meditations. Jesus is kind of setting up two camps: those who are going to obey His commandments and love Him by doing so, and those who will not.

It was St. Ignatius of Loyola, in the 16th century, who wrote a series of spiritual exercises for lay people. One of those spiritual exercises was a meditation on the "Two Standards." By "standards," he meant banners or flags.

The goal of this meditation was to choose your camp, to choose your flag. Are you going to pitch your tent in the camp of Jesus or in the camp of Satan?

This is a wonderful meditation to make a conscious, visual act of the will — a visual intention that we truly want to strive to live our lives in God's grace and friendship.

And we might be surprised how easy it becomes to migrate from the camp of Jesus to the camp of Satan.

We see that very much in our world today. People who have either knowingly or unknowingly, consciously or unconsciously, migrated from the camp of Jesus to the camp of Satan.

We might use the analogy of moving from the Spirit of Truth to living our lives according to the spirit of lies.

Exorcists, who deal with the demonic on a daily basis, give us some signs and warnings about what to look for in the spiritual life — indications that demonic influence may be at work.

One of those signs is rebellion.

Rebellion against God and the things of God — things that are good and right and just and holy and true.

Rebellion is why there are demons in the first place. Demons and devils were originally good angels who rebelled against God. And now their stock and trade is to tempt us to rebel against God and against all that is right and good and just and holy and true.

Another sign of the demonic is an inability to use right reason.

Often, when people fall into serious sin, the intellect becomes darkened, and they are unable to reason clearly about what is right and good and just and holy and true.

A perfect example might be people who are otherwise very intelligent, perhaps even highly educated, but cannot define what a woman is because their minds have become darkened and corrupted by transgender ideology and its lies.

Another sign of demonic influence is what is called the principle of inversion.

This happens in temptations all the time — when something evil is presented as something good. That is how temptation works. Something we know is wrong or sinful is presented as good, or at least “not that bad.”

But this can also happen in extreme ways.

For example, with abortion, demonic influence would say that abortion is something good, that it is “healthcare,” when in reality it is a violation of the commandment: You shall not directly and intentionally kill innocent human life.

Inversion. Good becomes evil, and evil becomes good.

And perhaps a final sign — though there are more — is violence and destruction when all else fails.

Get violent. Destroy.

We see this principle in mass murders followed by suicides. It is not enough simply to kill others; Satan also incites the person to take his own life.

We also see this in the culture of death around us, where we have moved from a cancel culture to what can become an assassination culture — destroying or

killing what you do not like or agree with.

So what Jesus says in the Gospel today is not merely something soft, warm, and fuzzy — “If you love me, do your best to keep my commandments.”

There is a real spiritual imperative here: that we strive to live according to the teachings of Jesus and the Holy Spirit whom He has given us.

The Holy Spirit keeps us in a place of spiritual safety, gives us the guidance we need to have a healthy spiritual life, and ultimately helps save our souls.

So, with all this talk about demons — Happy Mother's Day.

And I mean that sincerely, because Mary, our spiritual mother, is the terror of demons. They absolutely hate her, and they fear her.

In one account, an exorcist described how difficult it was to expel a demon. At one point, Our Blessed Mother was invoked, and the demon was heard saying to the other demons, “Oh no — she's here.”

Our Blessed Mother is a powerful intercessor for us against temptation.

And on this Mother's Day, let us also, with grateful hearts, thank our own mothers — living and deceased — who have been so instrumental in passing on the faith to us and teaching us to obey the commandments in order to love Jesus as He loves us.

Let us pray with grateful hearts that all mothers today will be blessed, and that we may continue to be blessed by their faithful example.

And as Peter said so beautifully in the first reading, may we consecrate the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts so that we may know the Lord, obey Him, and follow

His Holy Spirit and truth.

So that we may continue to know, love, and serve the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Happy Mother's Day.