**THURSDAY MARCH 24 – THIRD WEEK OF LENT [C]**

**He was driving out a demon (that was) mute, and when the demon had gone out, the mute person spoke and the crowds were amazed. Some of them said, "By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he drives out demons."**

**The Pharisees and the scribes had eluded the entire Holy Scripture and they had put their tradition on the lampstand, instead. This deceit is highlighted by Jesus in the Gospel in this way:** “**Now when the Pharisees with some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they observed that some of his disciples ate their meals with unclean, that is, unwashed, hands. (For the Pharisees and, in fact, all Jews, do not eat without carefully washing their hands, keeping the tradition of the elders. And on coming from the marketplace they do not eat without purifying themselves. And there are many other things that they have traditionally observed, the purification of cups and jugs and kettles (and beds).) So the Pharisees and scribes questioned him, "Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of the elders but instead eat a meal with unclean hands?" He responded, "Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines human precepts.' You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition." He went on to say, "How well you have set aside the commandment of God in order to uphold your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and 'Whoever curses father or mother shall die.' Yet you say, 'If a person says to father or mother, "Any support you might have had from me is qorban"' (meaning, dedicated to God), you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother. You nullify the word of God in favor of your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many such things." (Mk 7, 1-13)**

**What to do to make this and every other unmasking carried out by Jesus toward their false doctrine and their false teachings vain? They first attempt to accuse Jesus of violating the Sabbath. If this accusation had passed, they would have resulted to be true teachers and Jesus false. However, this accusation does not hold before the people. The deeds Jesus fulfils attest that He is truly from God.**

**It urges to disprove the divine origin of Jesus’s deeds. How to succeed in their satanic and devilish intent? By attributing his great deeds that are of liberation from unclean to a power that Beelzebul, the prince of devils, would have given to Jesus. This accusation against Jesus the Lord not only attests and reveals their evil and wickedness. In order to annihilate Christ the Lord they attribute his deeds, that are deeds of his Person that is God and Only Begotten Son of the Father, to the devil. It also reveals their great ignorance and total non-knowledge both of God and of the devil. They know neither God nor the devil. They use God and the devil only to divert the people from Jesus. But thus doing they fight against the known truth, they lay hold of it and thus they fall in the most sad sin against the Holy Spirit. Jesus contradicts their affirmation by merely saying that if he drives our demons through the work of Beelzebul, the kingdom of Satan is divided. It is impossible that this happens. Jesus knows Satan and knows the unity of his kingdom. He also adds that if He drives out the demons with the finger of God, the kingdom of God has come upon them and not only are they refusing it, but they are stopping others from receiving it. They do not enter and they stop those who would want it to enter: double, most sad sin. Here is what Jesus will say to them: ”Woe to you, scholars of the law! You have taken away the key of knowledge. You yourselves did not enter and you stopped those trying to enter." (Lk 11, 52) Their word is a key that lock the gates of the kingdom of truth and of justice. They do not enter and no one must enter. This is most sad satanic and devilish wickedness.**

**Let us read the text of Lk 11,14-23**

**He was driving out a demon (that was) mute, and when the demon had gone out, the mute person spoke and the crowds were amazed. Some of them said, "By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he drives out demons." Others, to test him, asked him for a sign from heaven. But he knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house. And if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that it is by Beelzebul that I drive out demons. If I, then, drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own people drive them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that (I) drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man fully armed guards his palace, his possessions are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him, he takes away the armor on which he relied and distributes the spoils. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.**

**It is a righteous thing that we ask: today what is the strategy of Satan to destroy those who still believe in the Word of the Lord? His strategy is that of the piranha. The devil makes himself more than a legion of piranha. With this legion, he aggresses those who proclaim the Gospel until devouring them alive. The legion of piranhas is made up of those who say to be disciples of Jesus and proclaim themselves to the world as defenders of the true religion and of the true Church. When the legion preys on a missionary of Jesus, it is the end for him. They hurl insults, falsities, lies until destroying him physically as well. Successful strategy.**