

## 10<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

I remember well having sleepless nights and vivid nightmares as a 10 year old boy as a result of my teacher at the time- Brother Canute- telling us vivid horror stories about the devil. One of them, I remember, had as its villain a Mr Natas- who was a cobbler- a maker of shoes- going around the Village looking for soles. Bright little chap that I was- I soon worked out that Natas was Satan spelt back to front and that soles had a double meaning.

As a result I still cannot bear to listen to horror stories and hate horror movies with a passion.

I don't know if I am grateful to Br. Canute or not. On my conscious level I am OK. I know that Christ has won the decisive victory over Satan; that in the words of today's Gospel He has entered Satan's house and has overcome him. But on a sub conscious level, I don't know.

While Christ has tied up Satan, it is a well-established point that we can, if we choose, untie him. Hence the craziness of people who dabble in the occult and invite Satan into their lives.

Satan still has mighty powers. He is the father of lies; delighting in smudging the distinction between good and evil, confusing right order and propelling us into confusion and moral darkness.

In the first Reading Adam blames Eve for his sin. She in turn blames the serpent- Satan- who deceived her with half-truths. God accepts the culpability of the serpent who is sentenced to crawl on its belly in the dust of the earth. And God promises the coming of a Messiah Who would decisively crush the head of the serpent- but the snake would bite the Messiah on the heel... foreshadowing the sufferings of Christ on the Cross.

The Gospel of St. Mark describes the whole life of Christ as a battle with Satan. The scribes, proud in their prestigious position in society and arrogant in their belief that they were the ultimate authority in the Scriptures were unwilling to listen to a despised so-called prophet from Nazareth. They were an easy prey to Satan's lies. Their accusation attributing Jesus' healing miracles to the power of Satan sets right order into topsy-turvy. To accuse Christ- the All-holy One- Who is God- of being an angel of Satan was the ultimate blasphemy.

The sin of the scribes could only be forgiven if they repented and acknowledged the truth that Jesus was God. But blinded by their self-righteousness, they were set miles deep in their lies.

As Christians we have to constantly battle to grasp what is the Will of God for us? What is delusion? What is the truth?

Jesus makes it ever so clear how high the stakes are. Looking at the humble folk sitting around Him, soaking up His teachings, Jesus says: "Anyone who is open to God's Will, that person is my brother and sister and mother."

Yesterday morning I baptised a young boy, Kieran. It was such a happy occasion. At the end of the ceremony a special candle was lit from the Paschal Candle. As I handed the candle to Kieran. I said: "Receive the Light of Christ. Let the teachings of Jesus be a light guiding you through your life; giving you certainty about what is good and what is evil."

Earlier in the ceremony Kieran had been asked, "Do you reject Satan and all his empty promises?"

We have a powerful enemy in Satan; an angel created good by God but who as the IVth Lateran Council said, "Became evil by choice." Satan is a malignant power in the Universe. We dismiss him at our peril. The Bible in its opening story of the fall of Adam and Eve makes it clear that there has been a battle waging from the beginning of time for the heart of mankind. And for thousands of years it appeared as if Satan had won dominion over mankind. A huge chasm of rejection and misunderstanding had grown between mankind and God.

But this accursed dominion was broken by Christ's Incarnation, Death and Resurrection. But Satan fights on. And we are the target. We are helpless without God's help. Within the Church we are bonded into Christ and given powerful graces by the Holy Spirit. We have the Sacraments. We have the prayers of Mary, the Saints and the Angels. It is the height of folly to try to live apart from Christ, apart from the Church. We become easy pickings.

But in Christ there is surety of victory.

On that fateful day when we realise that there will be no tomorrow, we will have no need to be fearful of Satan. Christ is all-powerful. Hold onto Jesus. Pray to Mary. And all will be well. All will be well.