

[Spirituality](#)



(Unsplash/Mauro Mora)



by Thomas Gumbleton

[View Author Profile](#)

[Join the Conversation](#)

June 14, 2018

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

As you've noticed, I'm sure, we are going back to the regular cycle of readings after we have gone through the season of Lent and Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, and those three feasts: Trinity, Corpus Christi and Sacred Heart. We're now returning in our gospel cycle to the weekly readings that this year are taken from St. Mark's gospel. I mention this because I think if we know a little bit about Mark's gospel, we will be able to listen to these readings with greater ability to understand.

Mark's gospel is the one that portrays Jesus in his most human characteristics. In Mark's gospel, Jesus is fully human; you can't miss it. John's Gospel is much more theological and Jesus, you clearly begin to see, is the vine. Mark's Gospel and Matthew, to a lesser extent, show Jesus much more in his humanness where he gets angry or he feels sad and he weeps. He's very human. But then also just as kind of a context, I want to mention here, too, that this is near the beginning of the public life of Jesus.

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

[June 10, 2018](#)

Genesis 3:9-15

Psalms 130

2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

Mark 3:20-35

You remember (you've heard it twice in the last few weeks), the gospel where Jesus comes to the disciples on Easter Sunday night. He comes among them, they're afraid, and they're hiding and feeling very guilty. He says to them, "Peace be with you." Then he goes on (this is the important part), "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive; they are forgiven. The evil you restrain, it is restrained. ... As God has sent me, I send you." That was the work of Jesus — to forgive, reconcile, bring love, but also to restrain evil, to drive it away. That's what we're beginning to hear about in today's gospel.

The religious leaders come to Jesus accusing him because he is drawing such large crowds. People are following him in great numbers, listening to his word, but also being healed, being brought to peace, being given a chance to be joyful, to be filled with a sense of God's mercy. The Pharisees don't like it, the religious teachers. They're opposed to what Jesus is doing so what do they do? They say it's the power of the devil that he's doing this, that Jesus is driving out evil by the devil. They're accusing him of being diabolical, filled with evil.

And as we just heard in the gospel, Jesus easily disposes of their accusations by pointing out what is so clear, "If the devil is driving out the devil, the devil's house is divided and it will not stand." You can't have that kind of division and be successful. Jesus goes on to continue to teach in that way for a few moments. But then what is really important in today's gospel: First that Jesus shows us that his work is to drive away evil, but also to draw people together. It happens in a strange way, in a sense, that Jesus teaches us this because at the beginning of the gospel, we hear the family of Jesus is upset.

They think he's crazy, actually. They say that, "He's out of his mind." They're concerned so they come to take him home. He's in Capernaum where he's been preaching and establishing his community of disciples. They want to take him back to Nazareth. In the way Mark does it in the gospel, he puts that at the beginning so we become alert to it, then he shows what Jesus is doing in driving away evil, and now he comes back to it.

It teaches us the most important lesson of today's gospel because Jesus teaches through that question, "Who are my mother, my brothers and my sisters?" You might think at first this is a slight against Mary and his other relatives, but it isn't because Jesus shows how they are drawn into a larger family, as are we. "Whoever does the will of God, that one is mother, brother and sister to me." Jesus is forming this larger community that includes his immediate family, of course, and includes Mary, who above all did the will of God.

But then he shows us this expanded family of his disciples: "Whoever does the will of God is mother, brother and sister to me." That's who we are. We're the ones that have been called to be his disciples. We struggle to do the will of God that makes us sisters and brothers to Jesus. Jesus is calling the whole of the human family to this because it's only through the whole of the human family that the work of Jesus can be carried out to drive away evil and to establish a community of love.

It has to be on a universal basis, even though it starts in our immediate community, our immediate family, and our immediate neighborhood. But ultimately, this family that Jesus is drawing together confronts the evil throughout the world. We are called to do that because we are part of this community of disciples of Jesus. Again, it can be within our family that we have to reconcile, have to drive away some evil. It can be in our community, our country, but in the world.

There are a couple of things right now that are of extreme importance if we're going to act as a human family of Jesus, the universal family. One of them is something that Pope Francis did (this just happened yesterday). He called together a conference of people to the Vatican. This is written up:

Three years ago, Pope Francis issued a sweeping letter that highlighted the global crisis posed by climate change and called for swift action to save the environment and the planet. [That was three years ago. Things have gotten worse.]

On Saturday, the pope gathered money managers and titans of the world's biggest oil companies during a closed-door conference at the Vatican and asked them if they had gotten the message.

"There is no time to lose," Francis told them on Saturday.

Pressure has been building on oil and gas companies to transition to less polluting forms of energy, with the threat of fossil-fuel divestment sometimes used as a stick.

The pope said oil and gas companies had made commendable progress and were "developing more careful approaches to the assessment of climate risk and adjusting their business practices accordingly." But those actions were not yet enough.

"Will we turn the corner in time? No one can answer that question with certainty," the pope said. "But with each month that passes, the challenge of energy transition becomes more pressing."

He called on the participants "to be the core of a group of leaders who envision the global energy transition in a way that will take into

account all the peoples of the earth, as well as future generations and all species and ecosystems."

The pope is trying to confront an evil that will overwhelm our world if we don't begin to go along with these changes and insist on them. That is an almost unspeakable evil that we, as a community of disciples of Jesus, must confront. But then look at the other thing that's happening this weekend. President [Donald] Trump has now landed in Singapore and here we confront another evil that can destroy our planet.

The president is hoping to bring about denuclearization of North Korea. He's very committed to that, which means however, we also have to begin to denuclearize. We can't have nuclear weapons and have confidence that our planet will survive. We're very close to destroying it. If these efforts fail, this evil could overwhelm us. So this gospel today is very, very timely. Jesus is calling us to confront evil, to resist evil: "Whatever evil you resist, it can be resisted and the evil you forgive, those are forgiven." That's our call.

Advertisement

But then finally, we do this as a community and that brings us very close to home. There's a threat to this community; our community is to be disbanded. When Jesus says that the community is the most important thing, "Who is brother and sister and mother to me? Those who are my disciples," they form a community and those communities are what is needed to resist evil. None of us can do it alone, so we have to struggle to maintain this community, which is so vibrant, so committed, and so filled with love for one another.

We must struggle to make sure it doesn't get destroyed. "Whoever is doing the will of God is mother, brother and sister to me." Community is, above all else, the most important way we can be disciples of Jesus. We have a community that is strong and we must struggle to keep it. I say this with full awareness that it's getting closer and closer to the moment when you will receive the word that you'll be disbanded.

But I hope that somehow we can make our voices heard and say that we are a community, we are brothers and sisters to Jesus — his mother, brother and sister, and we are here to restrain evil in our world. We will do it as individuals and as a community. We are here to bring reconciliation and peace to our world as individuals

and as a community. That's our call from Jesus in today's scriptures. I hope we hear that call and struggle to accept it, carry it out, and live it in the way that Jesus intends.

[Homily given June 10, 2018, at St. Philomena in Detroit. The transcripts of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton's homilies are [posted weekly](#) to NCRonline.org. [Sign up here](#) to receive an email alert when the latest homily is posted.]