

10th Sunday in Ordinary Time

According to an article published by ABC News in January 2007, a movement called the “Rational Response Squad” issued the “Blasphemy Challenge,” based on a literal reading of one of the verses for today, Mark 3:29. That verse says, “Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.”

Believing they were saying something that could not be taken back, people began making videos of themselves saying that they denied the Holy Spirit or that the Holy Spirit and God did not exist. These videos were then posted to YouTube or other sites and promoted by the Rational Response Squad. Religious leaders were most distressed by the Squad’s targeting of young people. There are several things wrong with the Blasphemy Challenge besides the fact that it might be, well, blasphemous. Why would you even bother to dare a deity you don’t believe exists? So by doing it, they were in fact giving credence to what they were trying to deny.

Sin comes into the world by not listening to God. Sin creates conflict in the world, and it will never end until we choose to follow the Lord Jesus. It is the Lord Jesus who can remake us in the image of God and restore to us the loving relationship with God. The devil is never as powerful as the Lord Jesus and His Spirit. It is Jesus himself who invites us to follow him and to be his family.

The second reading comes from the Second Letter to the Corinthians. Today this letter tells us: “The one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and place us with you in his presence.” God will place us with Christ Jesus, but He must first remake us in His image, which we have lost through sin. This life, for all of us, is a matter of allowing God to remake us. We have to be patient. We might think that we are ready to see God now, but for most of us, there is a recognition that we are not yet so full of love that we can simply come into the presence of the Lord.

Just as in the First Reading, so also in this Second Letter to the Corinthians, we see that there is an awareness of the spiritual combat which must take place in our world and in each of us personally so that we are truly ready to “see the Lord as He is” and come to be like Him. For many people today, life is simply about enjoying as much of it as we can get. For us who follow Christ, life is about becoming as much as possible like Christ so that we reflect the glory of the Father.

The Gospel of Saint Mark today is a delight because it shows the family of Jesus believing that Jesus has truly lost His mind. And it shows us Jesus completely frustrated with what had happened in the temple. Jesus wants the House of God to be a house of prayer, not a business enterprise.

We can understand that the family of Jesus does not understand Him. Jesus is so different! Jesus is completely caught up in doing the work of his Father and pays no attention to anything else. This looks like insanity to any normal person. Jesus is not getting enough to eat. He probably is not getting enough sleep. He seems obsessed with healing people. All in all, his family decides that Jesus has lost his mind.

So Jesus irritates and bothers his family. With the Scribes and Pharisees, it is worse. Jesus seems to have an understanding of the law that is completely different from theirs. They want to challenge Jesus but recognize how popular he is among the ordinary people. They think that Jesus is possessed by the devil, but again they fear saying anything like that.

For us, all of this is a call to follow the Lord, no matter what our families or other religious people think about us. We are challenged to do the works of God—to recognize that the fight between good and evil is still going on in our own time. We must also recognize that it is God who is at work, and so we can trust that we are being remade in the image of God.