

4. January 2020

“Jesus undoes the work of the devil”

1 Jn 3,7-10

Children, do not let anyone lead you astray. Whoever acts uprightly is upright, just as he is upright. Whoever lives sinfully belongs to the devil, since the devil has been a sinner from the beginning. This was the purpose of the appearing of the Son of God, to undo the work of the devil. No one who is a child of God sins because God's seed remains in him. Nor can he sin, because he is a child of God. This is what distinguishes the children of God from the children of the devil: whoever does not live uprightly and does not love his brother is not from God.

John we recognize by his very clear language! These are statements that today sometimes do not come easily from the lips and we are more inclined to differentiate them more. Of course it is not wrong to differentiate things. But this must not mean that we weaken the statements they contain!

Today it is clearly stated: “*Whoever lives sinfully belongs to the devil*” and Jesus has come “*to undo the work of the devil*”!

In fact, the sin into which we were led by the devil was a true seduction of man. The devil tempted us in the way he was tempted in himself: namely, to want to be like God.

This is the innermost core of sin! It is a rebellion, a rebellion against God, a transgression of what God in his wisdom has thought for us! The original sin is clearly described in Genesis, it is a sin of pride!

The devil tries to pull us into his own rebellion against God, and wants to spread this rebellion further and further! He wants us to sin because he has influence over us through sin. In this indirect way he also tries to cause suffering to God, because God suffers - in a correctly understood sense - because of the man who sins. Jesus suffered and died on the cross for our sins.

God suffers in his love for us, because man is not with him and he cannot truly abide by him, man does not receive the fullness of his love, which he, as our loving Father, gives to his creature, to his child, to his son, to his daughter. Sin closes off the willingness to receive this fullness.

In sin, man remains closed in himself and under the influence of the devil! The devil now distorts the true image of God and tries everything so that we do not encounter God as a loving Father. We are supposed to identify Him quasi as a dictator, as someone who envies us or does not grant us something important for us, who does not want true happiness for us. The devil presents us a God who wants not to give us the beautiful and pleasant aspects of this life!

It is a terrible and unjust image of God that is supposed to arise in us. Man should remain in this deception and not get to know God as He really is!

Jesus on the other hand comes to destroy these works of the devil!

If we learn to listen to Jesus, to accept His offer of forgiveness of sins, the evil spirit can no longer dominate us as before! We learn to curb our destructive passions, which are often under the influence of the evil spirit. The Holy Spirit helps to free us from wrong thoughts, to free us from serious errors, to overcome hatred, envy and other bad things in our hearts.

Jesus takes away this influence of the devil on us and instead lets His spirit work in us. This causes us to begin to strive for virtues, to avoid vices, to seek God's will and His nearness, to flee sin attentively, even to hate it, to recognize the works of the devil more and more precisely and to reject them!

In many ways God comes to our aid! He teaches us through His word, through the authentic teaching of the Church, He offers us the sacraments and comes to our aid in everything! The Spirit of the Lord works in us ever more strongly if we listen to Him and follow His instructions. He leads us more deeply into prayer, to true charity, He makes us aware of the entanglements of other people, whom we learn to recognize and love more and more as our brothers and sisters. He invites us to do the works of mercy!

We must prepare ourselves for a long journey. Sin has deeply taken hold of us and deformed us! Sin has not been able to destroy everything, but it has had a terrible effect on the lives of men. The will of man has been weakened and his mind darkened and we have lost - as a result of original sin - the original life of grace! What a terrible loss!

But God has had mercy on us and wants to let His Kingdom arise in us and for all, as we pray every day in the Lord's Prayer! The more His light shines, the more the darkness disappears!

The text makes us emphatically aware of brotherly love and calls us to justice. For it is precisely this, that shows the presence of God. It is the devil who acts unjustly towards God and towards human beings. He envies grace to man and his hatred persecutes him!

But Jesus overcame the powers of evil and called us to be His brothers. Now the seed of God is deeply ingrained in us and His Spirit has been given to us. It is this Spirit who cannot sin because He himself is God. If we remain in him and return to Him again and again with every transgression, we will manage, in the mercy of God and in the power of His strength, to leave the works of the devil completely and awaken more and more in the love for God and for people!