

## Homily

10<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time B 6.10.18

Fr. Todd Molinari

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We concluded last week our reflection on the two key dogmas of the faith – the Holy Trinity and the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and now we turn our attention to strengthening our faith by more and more closely following Christ as his baptized disciples who are now sent forth to be apostles of the Good News. Yet, as the readings we just heard proclaimed, this is a challenging task because we find ourselves in a fallen world. Not only that, but the disobedience of our first parents marks a crossroads for humanity: we are marked by moral confusion and selfishness, a condition that we cannot remedy on our own power, whether in the form of human intelligence or willpower. And we then ask: What is the role of Christ in all of this? What is it that Christ does that breaks into and through the state of humanity that is not only in the grip of objective moral evil but is also submerged into moral confusion in subjective experience. In other words, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they not only offended God by committing the objective offense of pride and disobedience, they also triggered the process by which they and all their descendants would find themselves in a perpetual state of inner conflict, turmoil and confusion. And this inner conflict and tension is better known as “self-doubt” or better “self-directed violence and harm”: When someone insults you, you feel insulted because you allow yourself to feel that way; to abdicate your sense of wholeness and allow the voice of another to affect you. It is both the objective sin against God and the self-inflicted wounds of our divided passions and instincts that Christ has come to heal.

The great narrative of the fall of Adam and Eve from original blessing with God needs no re-telling, but I would like to point out something key in this story: It is the fact that we never lose our ability to make choices, but that in itself does not answer the question of how to be a moral person or how to be in right relation with God. In their choice to disobey God, our first parents in fact choose a lie: The lie is that they can act independent of the conditions God has set down for being in friendship with Him and in themselves being whole and possessing inner unity. What tempts them is the lie that they can have it both ways: That you will eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and will be like God, in other words, the lie that you can act independently of God and not have it affect you either in your objective relationships or your inner life. They soon found that that was not the case. The story of humanity then is one that is marked by objective sin in all its awful forms and humanity’s interior division and conflict, with no relief in sight.

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is presented with a set of ironic responses to his healing and redeeming ministry: He is going about teaching people to love one another, that is, reduce external harm and violence to one another by taking the positive initiatives to reach out and

apologize, forgive, be merciful and love everyone without categorizations or prior hierarchies. In other words, forgiveness heals, being merciful brings more mercy, loving those you otherwise prefer not to love increases love and enables you to love where and when you thought you couldn't possibly love. Not only that, but with the healing and redeeming grace of Christ-centered love comes the inner healing of the self: When we forgive, apologize, make up for our past sins, make amends, admit to lying, start telling the truth, love the unlovable, etc, it begins a process in which my soul is less and less divided against itself and I become a more whole person. My true Self can emerge to the extent that I admit my harm to others and to the extent that I refuse to allow the harm that others do to me to turn inward on myself and then back outward again in the form of revenge.

And yet the family of Jesus say "he is out of his mind" and the scribes say "he is possessed by Beezebul." Their enslavement to the objective corruption of sin and its culture of violence, along with their own inner confusion and divided hearts lead them to conclude that Jesus is the crazy and possessed one. Jesus responds to this inner confusion and outer enslavement to sin with the clarity of the Gospel: It is only through tying up the "strong man" that the house can be plundered. This is a Jewish way of talking about God re-entering human affairs to overcome the power of sin and bring healing to humanity. It's a Biblical way of saying the only cure for us is "strong medicine" and "radical surgery", but once it's offered, take it, as difficult as it may be at first, it's better that refusing what Christ offers. The "sin against the Holy Spirit" is the refusal of the strong medicine of grace that is found in following Christ; it is the attitude of going along with the state of the human condition and allow oneself to drift with the group and not accept the challenge of being confronted with what Christ offers us: A way out of sin and inner confusion that is a narrow road, a difficult path. It's always easier to continue down the path I'm going. As we approach the altar to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, let us heed the words of Christ that bring healing to our lives and clarity to our souls.