

“All were amazed and asked one another, ‘What is this?’ (What does this mean?)”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, in the ‘70’s, there was a box-office, record-breaking movie called...

The Exorcist. It was about a possessed person, like the one I just read to you from St. Mark’s Gospel. It was based on a true case of a 14-year-old boy from Mt. Rainier, Md, in 1949. Newsweek magazine described it, at the time, this way:

“Pictures, chairs, and the boy’s bed would suddenly move about. At night, the boy could hardly sleep. After he was admitted to Georgetown University Hospital ...the boy began to mouth fierce curses in ancient languages and, at one point, while strapped helplessly to a bed, long, red scratches appeared on his body.”

The boy, eventually, survived an exorcism and now lives in the Washington, D.C., area. An old priest involved in the boy’s exorcism has taken a vow not to discuss it. He does, however, say that the experience has dramatically changed his life... for the better.

Like the people in today’s Gospel, we too ask, **“What does this mean?”** What is the deeper meaning behind Jesus’ power to expel evil spirits—a power he also gave to his Church?

Jesus answered the question himself, saying:

“It is... by the means of God’s power that I drive out demons, and this proves that the kingdom of God has already come to you.” ^{Lk.11:20}

The deeper meaning behind Jesus’ exorcisms is that the Kingdom of Satan, which enslaved people since Adam’s sin, is now giving way to the Kingdom of God.

This raises a question, the 1st of 2:

If Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom of God some 2,000 years ago, **WHY** is evil **still** so widespread? To put it another way, if Jesus inaugurated God’s Kingdom in **his** lifetime, why is Satan’s Kingdom still so powerful in **our** lifetime?

The answer is that the coming of God’s Kingdom is **not** an instant happening. It’s a gradual process. It’s not a one-time event. It’s an ongoing movement in human history!

Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom of God. True enough! **BUT**, there’s that proverbial **BUT** in life again, Jesus left to us the task of completing it. Remember, how, on Ascension Thursday, we said that Jesus passed the baton onto us ...in the relay race of life? That’s why we still pray in the Lord’s Prayer... “Thy kingdom come.”

Were we to compare God’s Kingdom to a plant, it might go something like this:

Jesus put the plant—the kingdom—in the soil. He left the job of cultivating it, fertilizing it, & watering it...to us! It is our job to see that the Kingdom produces the fruit God intended it to bear.

Now, this raises the 2nd question:

Why is God’s Kingdom so slow in coming?

Or, to put it another way, why is Satan’s Kingdom so slow in dying?

The answer is quite simple: we are not carrying out our job as well as we could be doing it.

Here’s just one example.

How many of us live out Jesus' command to **love one another ...as he loves us?** ^{Jn.15:12}
You know the answer to that as well as I do.

Now, our failure to love others as Jesus loves us ...extends, not only to our enemies/adversaries and to our neighbors, **BUT** also to... our own families! The reason we fail to love, even our own family as we should, is usually ...**NOT** because of malice on our part. And it's not, necessarily, because we are mean-spirited, envious, or jealous

"What, then, is the reason?" you ask.
Well, at long last, I am glad you asked that question!

More often than not, it is simply because we are **negligent!** We are **forgetful!** We tend to take everyone and everything **for granted.** We think we will live forever and we have plenty of time. Thus, we are delinquent in our vocation to love!

You see, we get so involved in the affairs of life that we easily overlook the needs of family members. We get so caught up in everyday matters... that we forget how wonderful they really are. And, to ...only tell them so ...at the funeral home ...is a sad thing, indeed!

Our problem is that we don't slow down enough to appreciate one another. We are so-o busy in doing things, that we miss the one thing that makes all the other things worthwhile. We worry about the things we think we need and about the money to buy such, **BUT** forget about the things we know money **cannot** buy: **one another** ...and the time to 'be' ... **with** one another!

Today's Gospel is an invitation to **slow down.** We have to realize that we only **think** we are in charge. Today's Gospel invites us to see people... **just as they are**, and to love them ...as Jesus loves us, **just the way we are.**

Here's the summary:

Jesus inaugurated God's Kingdom on earth.

BUT, he left, to us, the job of completing it.

One reason it is so slow in reaching completion is our failure to love other people, even our own family, as we should.

And our failure to love... is not because we are so mean-spirited or full of malice.

It, most often, is because we don't slow down to see people as they really are

—beautiful creations of God, to be loved ...as Jesus has loved us!

I close with this simple prayer:

**Slow me down, Lord. Help me see...
that it is necessary to spend time
working for things money can buy.**

**BUT, at the same time, help me see...
that it is necessary to take time,
to make sure
I don't lose the things money can**NOI** buy!**

May our beautiful, loving Creator, our Abba, bless you...
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.