

### **Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

One of the things that most of us learn from an early age is the ability to blame someone else for the wrong things that we do. When children are caught fighting it is nearly always the other person who begins the fight. If we break something and cannot say that we did not do it, we still try to say that it was someone else's fault. There is always someone who makes us do these things.

The writer of the book of Genesis understood human frailty well. When God asks Adam why he had lost his innocence and was hiding from God, Adam blamed his wife Eve for tempting him to eat from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. "She gave me the fruit and I ate it." When Eve is challenged by God, she quickly blames the serpent. "The serpent tempted me, and I ate." This becomes an opportunity for God to spell out for us all the reality of evil in our world. God says to the serpent "I will make you enemies of each other; you and the woman, your offspring and her offspring. It will crush your head, and you will strike its heel."

We revisit this reading to reflect upon the role of Mary, the new Eve, in her role of giving birth to the one who will ultimately crush the head of the serpent. But the victory over evil that Jesus won by his death and resurrection is yet to be seen in its fullness in the world in which we live. The force of evil is still very active.

The challenge that we have is to recognize the various faces that the evil one uses to appeal to us. Every temptation that comes our way is wrapped as if it were a gift.

Our gospel today gives us much to think about. It could be described as a sandwich. The slices of bread are the two stories about the family of Jesus. The filling is the accusation that Jesus is acting in the name of the prince of devils and how Jesus replies to that.

We are told that Jesus went home with his disciples, but there were so many people crowding around them that they didn't even have time to eat. His family came to take charge of him because they thought he was out of his mind. None of his family members seem to be open to the call to become his disciples. None of them seem to be able to accept who he really is. Maybe that is a pattern that is common to many families. We often find it easier to see where God is in those who are not so close to us than those who love us well. Whenever we take love for granted, we find it hard to see the source of that love.

The people who should know best about finding where God is, then accuse Jesus of acting in the name and the power of the evil one. Jesus takes those religious leaders to task by using two little parables about division being

the cause of downfall. Jesus asks, “How can Satan cast out Satan?” Jesus is the stronger one who has come to tie up and burgle Satan’s house.

What Jesus says next about sin and forgiveness has given many people something to write about. What is this blaspheming against the Holy? What is this sin that can never be forgiven? The context of this story helps us to answer those questions. The opponents of Jesus were refusing to see where God was in the words and actions of Jesus. They were closing themselves off from allowing God to speak to them through him. They were blaspheming against the Holy Spirit by attributing to the evil one what was being done by the power of the Spirit in Jesus. When people take that position then God has nowhere to go. God cannot offer forgiveness to someone who has closed themselves off from God.

Whenever we recognize that we have done something wrong we are already opening the door to God’s forgiveness. Whenever we take time to listen to someone who sees things differently from how we see them, we are already inviting the Spirit of Truth to be at work in us and in them. Maybe when we next use our phone or iPad to take a photograph we might pray a little prayer that we be as open to the light as our cameras are.

The last part of the gospel completes the sandwich and returns to the theme of family. The blood relations of Jesus stand outside and send in a message asking for Jesus. This is the opportunity for Jesus to talk about the new family that is gathered around him. He asks, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” He looks at those who have become his disciples and says, “Here are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother.”

Are we able to hear Jesus say that about us? Do we think of ourselves as being brothers and sisters of Jesus? We do often talk about the Church as the family of God. We talk about infants being Baptised into that family. On Friday 26 young people will take the next step in becoming members of our Church family when they receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Next weekend these children will become full members of our family when they receive Jesus in the Eucharist for the first time.

Whatever we say about the family of Jesus, whatever the rituals we complete. the measure of being the brothers and sisters of Jesus will always be our willingness to do the will of God. Like children in any family we will not get it right all the time. But when our hearts are open to God’s love, our head, our feet and our hands will follow.