

III Lent 2025

Sermon-Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

*Ephesians 5.1-14 St. Luke 11.14-28*



Spring has arrived! It's time to grab the vacuum, broom and dustpan and clean house. The thing about spring housecleaning...we can't stop once we think our house is in order. We have to keep on top of things, if we don't want our house to get messy again.

Lent is our time for us to do some spiritual house cleaning. We start our spiritual house cleaning by turning back to God. In Psalm 51 ask him God to create a pure heart in us and put a new a loyal spirit in us. Spiritual house cleaning isn't a one-time event...we must always ask God to send his Holy Spirit to help us keep our house in order.

In this morning's Gospel, Jesus heals a man who had a demon that kept him from speaking. We don't know anything about the man or how long he had been unable to speak. Once the demon was gone, the man was able to speak. God has the power to drive out demons. Jesus drives out demons. Jesus is God!

The Gospel tells us some people who saw Jesus heal the man accused him of driving out demons by the power of Beelzebub...the chief demon...Satan himself. *Beelzebub* means "Lord of the Flies". Flies hang around messy garbage dumps and dead bodies. Satan likes garbage dumps. He likes to see people hurt and suffering. He would have done nothing to heal the man.

The charge that Jesus is operating as an agent for Satan is ridiculous. Satan would not work against himself. The people who were accusing Jesus would then have to admit their own ancestors who healed people were also working for Satan...something they would never admit.

Jesus then tells three separate but related short stories...

*...A country, a family, (or a parish church for that matter) that is divided into groups will not survive.*

*...A man who wishes to keep his house safe from being broken into has to protect himself and his possessions. Today we keep our homes and property safe by installing burglar alarms and cameras.*

*...Once a person's spiritual house is in order, he has to keep it clean. Otherwise things could get messier than before.*

Lent is about asking God to keep our minds, bodies and souls free of the dust and debris messing up our spiritual lives. Jesus has been through every test we go through and gets the challenges we face. God does not like to see us suffer and can heal us physically and spiritually.

Once our spiritual house has been through a thorough spring-cleaning and things are nice and fresh...we have to replace the bad things we just threw out...with good things. The Devil...that old trickster...likes nothing better than to see us let our guard down...so he can come back in and mess up our lives again. We need to keep our spiritual burglar alarms and cameras in good working order...through persistent prayer.

We can arm ourselves against Satan's attacks and keep our spiritual house in order by doing what our friend, Saint Paul, tells us to do in the Epistle. We must remind ourselves we are God's children and must try to be like him. Everything we do must be controlled by love that comes from the heart. Paul goes on to say Jesus gave his life for us as a "sweet smelling offering" that was pleasing to God. We want to give our own lives to God as sweet smelling offerings.

Jesus is the Light of the World...the Light of Saint John's Gospel that can never be extinguished. Our friend, Saint Paul, reminds us we live in the Light of Christ, and our lives should reflect this is how we behave toward others. We are to avoid actions that displease God, hurt others and hurt ourselves. Some people do things at night thinking they won't get caught. When they do get caught, their bad behavior is made public for everyone to see. We should never do anything we wouldn't want seen on the Internet.

If we always try to do the right thing...if we always try to act for the good of others just as Jesus acted for the good of the man he healed in the Gospel...if we always try to walk as children of the Light of Christ just as our friend, Paul, says we should...then we are trying to keep our spiritual house in order.

Lent is the time for us to start doing some spiritual house cleaning, but we shouldn't stop now. Let's ask God to empower us with his Holy Spirit to help us keep our house clean and in order at all times.

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