

## **Meditation for Thursday, April 2, 2020**

A Thursday reflection from Fr.:

Jesus said to the Jews: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever keeps my word will never see death." So the Jews said to him, "Now we are sure that you are possessed." John 8: 51-52

The above line comes from today's Gospel. It's hard to imagine anything worse that could be said about Jesus. Did they really think He was possessed by the evil one? It appears so. Jesus reveals the sacred Truth that He and He alone is the pathway to eternal happiness. Unfortunately, the response from some hearing this message is deeply disappointing, slanderous, and malicious.

It's hard to know what was going on in their minds to cause them to say such a thing. Perhaps they were jealous of Jesus, or perhaps they were just seriously confused. Whatever the case may be, they spoke something that was seriously damaging.

The damage of such a statement was not so much toward Jesus; rather, it was damaging to themselves as well as to those around Him. Jesus could personally handle whatever was said about Him, but others could not. Today's Gospel is a reminder that our own words can do great harm to ourselves and to others.

When we say something that is damaging toward another, it's hard to retract it. It's hard to later apologize and mend the wound we have caused. The damage is primarily done to our own heart in that it's hard to let go of our error and humbly move forward. But this is the only way forward if we want to undo the damage that we have caused. It also takes humility on the part of the person we have hurt to accept our desire to mend the relationship. Sometimes it is easier to hold on to the hurt because it seems to give us a sense of power in the relationship. It is an attitude that says, "I have something you want but I am not going to give it to you." Forgiveness is a give and take relationship.

Secondly, negative comments also damage those who listen to what we say. Some may have rejected this malicious statement about Jesus but others may have pondered it and started to wonder if in fact Jesus was possessed. Thus, seeds of doubt were sown resulting in incorrect assumptions about the person. I think this is the danger associated with social media. Personally, I do nothing with social media and get a little nervous when I hear things like "Hey, I saw your picture on Facebook." Sometimes there is no context for pictures posted. As a result, something innocent can be misunderstood and the person's reputation can easily be tarnished. A simple photo can lead to doubt in the minds of others unfairly so.

After reading today's Gospel I have thought about my own speech and words. Are there things that you or I have spoken to others that we now realize were erroneous or misleading? If so, have we tried to undo the damage by retracting those words and apologizing? Here is something else I have thought about today. It is so easy to be drawn into the negative or malicious conversation of others. Such conversations cast doubt on the person discussed. Yet, often times I find that when I have been involved in less than charitable conversations, I soon find there is another side and all the assumptions I made about the person in question are baseless. Have you allowed yourself to be influenced by such conversations? If so, resolve to silence your ears to such errors and look for ways to speak the truth. We won't do this perfectly, and there will be many times of failure, but the more we try to be aware, the sooner we will catch ourselves in such moments

Here is a little meditation I found today that touches upon today's reflection and Gospel message. Be assured that when I write these things, these are my personal thoughts and are things I, too, need to work on in life. My words are not a negative reflection on anyone but simply offered during this time when the Evil one wants to cause doubt about everything and everyone, including God. We are in a stressful time, for sure, and in stressful times we can all get caught up in a dangerous web of things that are not true.

Lord, give me the grace of speaking holy words that always give You glory and reflect the eternal Truths alive in Your Heart. Help me to also be aware of the lies all around me in this world of sin. May Your Heart filter out the errors and allow only the seeds of Truth to be planted in my own mind and heart. Jesus, I trust in You.