

“If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.” (Mk 3:25:26). Yesterday was a dark day for democracy. The images of mobs assaulting the Capitol spread like a virus around the world shocking many nations who have always looked to the American way for guidance. Satan, the father of all lies is always looking to deceive, always looking to sew division through hatred, violence and mob rule.

Just before our Gospel reading for today, Jesus stood up to the devil and rejected his lies. Jesus offers a wonderful role model for standing up to evil and rebuffing the devil.

- “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” And Jesus responds, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone’” (Lk 4:3-4). Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy: “It is not by bread alone that people live, but by all that comes forth from the mouth of the LORD” (8:3). The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth comes from the mouth of the LORD.
- Have we not heard similar lies in recent days? “If you do your job, you will find 11,780 votes for me.” And the Georgia Secretary of State shrugged off the lies and attested to the truth of the vote count that had been triple checked.
- The devil lies to Jesus a second time: “I shall give to you all this power and their glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me” (Lk 4:6-7). Jesus shows his strength and power through obedience to God his Father, not by a flashy show of power for the devil. Jesus is strongest in the Garden of Gethsemane. “He advanced a little and fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass by him; he said, ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will’” (Mk 14:35-36).
- When a bully tries to exercise his power and influence, he resorts to threats, coercion and force. He invites others to do his bidding. He shows his weakness through his threats of violence and his lack of integrity.
- The devil lies to Jesus a third time. “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,’ and: ‘With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone’” (Lk 4:9:11). Jesus counters with the proper use of scripture: “You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test” (Lk 4:12, Dt 6:16, 1 Cor 10:9).
- At the end of the Gospel when Jesus is arrested, a disciple draws his sword and severs the ear of the high priest’s servant. Jesus responds: “Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father and he will not provide me at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Mt 26:53). Jesus submitted to arrest and offered his life on the cross for our salvation. Jesus demonstrates that he is the Son of God by his supreme act of love and sacrifice on the cross. Jesus defeats the devil with love and sacrifice.

Failing to tempt Jesus in the desert, the devil departs, and Jesus goes to Nazareth where he stands up in the synagogue and reads: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (Lk 4:18-19).

Jesus has come to share the good news and to offer hope to the economically and socially poor. Many were looking for a messiah who would exercise power and use force to push the Romans out of Israel. His own townspeople “were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him

out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong” (4:29-30). Is this not reminiscent of the mob that descended on the Capitol yesterday?

Jesus “passed through the midst of them and went away” (Lk 4:30). How are we to respond? America is at its finest when freedom and liberty are respected. Lady Liberty speaks loud to us from Ellis Island:

“Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”