

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT



GOSPEL: SAINT LUKE 11:14–28

Simplicity and openness of heart¹

19.1 First Point

Today's Gospel relates that Jesus Christ delivered a man possessed by a dumb demon,² that is, one who prevented the victim from speaking. This is a figure of those who remain mute in their relationship with their superiors, who do not open to them the depths of their hearts. This is very harmful, often the most harmful thing an inferior can do.

When you are sick, you can scarcely be cured if you cannot explain what is wrong; so too if you do not expose the wound in your soul to your spiritual physician, you run the risk of remaining ill for a long time. What was at first only a slight spiritual difficulty becomes a strong temptation, because the sufferer did not have the courage to discuss it openly with his Director. A fault thus concealed is followed by another still more serious, and in the end the problem becomes incurable because it was not brought to light at the beginning, when nothing would have been easier to remedy.

19.2 Second Point

It is pride or human respect that ordinarily prevents us from revealing our interior difficulties to our superior. It is pride, because we are ashamed to expose the depths of our soul and because our self-love suffers keenly when we have to admit certain weaknesses. So it seals our lips, persuading us that we would dishonor ourselves if we spoke sincerely to a superior, who then would get a bad impression of our behavior. This is what the demon does not fail to suggest to us on such occasions, taking pains to magnify things in our eyes, preventing us from surmounting the momentary confusion we experience in acknowledging these faults.

The remedy for this pernicious notion is to love the humiliation we experience in such an openness of heart, to carry out this duty as a powerful way to humble ourselves, and at the beginning simply to tell our superior everything that is most humiliating in the account we are giving of our conscience.

19.3 Third Point

The second reason why we ordinarily find it difficult to open ourselves fully to our superior is human respect. When we reflect that the fault in question concerns the very person to whom we must make it known, we do not know exactly how to go about it. We fear to cause pain, and so we sometimes resolve to say nothing. What a frivolous reason! What an ill-founded fear! For in such cases what happens is just the opposite of what we had imagined.

A superior to whom an inferior reveals everything going on interiorly, whether this has to do with the superior or with others, ought to feel, and usually does feel, a very special affection and esteem for the person who shows this kind of confidence. Such a superior is as unaffected as a stone by anything personal and does not become concerned about any revelations, except to apply the most appropriate remedy.

In the future consider all the thoughts that might prevent you from revealing yourself in all simplicity to those who are appointed to guide you as temptations from the demon, most dangerous and harmful to the good of your soul.

1. This meditation concerns the manifestation of conscience by the Brothers to their Directors and the Superior. Owing to the Holy See's Decree *Quemadmodum* of December 15, 1890, this meditation was modified in subsequent editions, substituting *confessor for superior*. The present translation follows the first edition.

2. Lk 11:14

