

4B

Coming out of the railway station of a strange city, one day the famous Bishop Fulton sheen, then Fr Sheen, stopped a small boy and asked him the way to the Cathedral.

The boy offered to walk with him and show him the way. But while walking, he decided to ask him a few questions:

Boy: What is your name?

FS: Fr Sheen

Boy: And what are you going to the Cathedral for?

FS: I'm going to talk to a lot of people there.

Boy: And what are you going to talk about.

FS: Oh, I'm going to tell them how to get to heaven

Ah go on, was the reply, why, you don't even know the way to the Cathedral.

I suppose Jesus came to show us the way to heaven and help us remove any obstacles which prevent us from getting there. He was first and foremost a teacher. He taught with conviction unlike the Scribes who were the run of the mill teachers at the time of Jesus. Jesus taught with authority. However, he was anything but authoritarian i.e. pushing his weight around for the sake of his own ego. But his words did have power behind them because when he gave orders to the unclean spirits to leave the man, they obeyed him.

Anything which drags us down which is out of the ordinary could be described as a bad spirit or bad karma as some people call it. It is more than the winter blues or the odd bouts of depression which affect most of us from time to time. Some people feel so bad about themselves that they want to end it all.

Last Sunday we heard that when Jesus went in to Galilee he proclaimed the Good News from God. Now the Good news is that whatever spirit is dragging us down and making our lives a misery we can be freed from it. Through the power which comes from Jesus this darkness can be lifted from our lives.

Darkness can be in the form of bad memories, excessive feeling of guilt, suicidal tendencies, crippling fears or phobias, emotional disorders, debilitating depression and many other things. I am inclined to believe that these things are similar to the bad spirits which Jesus drove out of people in his day.

Today he drove out an unclean spirit. We often talk about people being clean when they are no longer slaves to addictions of one kind or another. The addictions themselves are only the symptoms of a deeper malaise deep down in the soul of the person. Jesus, with authority behind his words can send these spirits on their way. He came to destroy them as we heard in the gospel today. Do we believe this?

Belief in Jesus is not just a pious feeling but a firm confidence in his power to drive out of our lives whatever is tormenting us especially in the spiritual realm. It could be a spirit of unforgiveness which is souring some of our relationships and making us bitter and tormented souls.

These spirits need driving but before Jesus can do it he needs our permission. In other words, deep down we have to want it passionately. When that happens, like the people in today's gospel the Lord's teaching will make a deep impression on us because through the power and words of Jesus we will be set free from all that would harm us.