

## 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's 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.

That's strange, was the reply, *considering you don't even know the way to the Cathedral.*

Well, Jesus came to show us the way to heaven. He taught with conviction, unlike the Scribes who were just repeating pious platitudes. Even though He taught with authority Jesus was anything but authoritarian. But his words did carry weight because, when he gave orders to the unclean spirits, they were sent on their way.

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's more than the winter blues or the odd bouts of melancholy which can affect us from time to time. Some people feel so bad about themselves that they want to end it all. They say it's the biggest cause of death among young adults. That's very worrying.

Last Sunday Jesus invited us to repent and believe in the Good News. Its good news to know that whatever spirit is dragging us down and making our lives a misery, Jesus can free us from its ill effects. The powers of darkness can bind us in different ways like damaging addictions, anxiety, bad guilt, suicidal thoughts, fears and insecurities. I am inclined to believe that

these could be compared to the bad spirits which Jesus drove out of people. I notice on the Irish paper some time ago, that Fr Pat Collins, one of the Vincentians who if you remember gave a mission here in 2003, recently told the Irish bishops that with the demise of the faith, there was increasing evidence of the malicious activity of the Evil One. He, himself, is an exorcist, so he should know.

Today Jesus drove out an unclean spirit. We often talk about people being clean when they've packed in drugs or drink or the horses or whatever. The addictions themselves are only symptoms of a deeper malaise going on in the soul of the person. As Catholics, by sharing our faith in Jesus with such persons and praying for them, we can bring hope to their situation.

Belief in Jesus is not just a pious feeling but a firm confidence in his power to set us free from all that would enslave us. It could be a spirit of un-forgiveness which is souring some of our relationships or a spirit of jealousy which has settled in our soul and causing havoc to our relationships.

These spirits need to be shown the door, but before Jesus can do it, he needs our consent. In other words we have to want it more than anything else. When we experience relief, our transformed life will be something to celebrate.