

Toon Suffys SJ

What is a demon, an evil spirit? In modern times we have difficulty with this term from the Bible. We think of sick people. We do not believe in spirits crawling into people, except perhaps in horror films.

But Mark, in his gospel today, gives us some clues to understanding what the demon in the synagogue was. He points in the direction of someone who rejects the good. For that spirit knows very clearly who Jesus is: You are the Holy One of God! So the spirit knows that Jesus was sent by God to save our world, to lead it to good.

Knowing this, the demon says to Jesus, and thus to God: What have we to do with you? Have You come to plunge us into ruin?

"The spirit that rejects the good. That already gives us a good idea of how we might understand the term "demon". That already gives us a good idea of how we might understand the term "demon". Someone else once spoke of a "yes but" spirit. A spirit that rejects everything with a "yes but" attitude. ... rejects everything.

This "yes but" is a phenomenon that we know well. Everyone knows people like that: they know very well what is right, what really leads to a solution, what is absolutely necessary. And yet they come up with a "yes but...". And they put the whole search for solutions on hold again. All the good will, all the hope, all the commitment that grew between people is lost in that "yes but". Thus, an evil spirit prevents a future for people with problems.

Sometimes the "yes but" spirit is in us. I know that I should exercise more, do something about my excess weight. But there is so much else that I am interested in that still needs to be done. And there is this book that I am working on, that I can't put down ... Yes, I think it's really important for my health, but

We have so many reasons and excuses for not doing something.

And not only in our personal lives. Also in society there is a lot of "yes but". We are all afraid of the virus. We know what we can do about it. But so often, in the small things, we flout our own safety. And last week's riots proved the yes-but attitude in our society. And every time virologists come up with measures, we (and many others) sigh, yes but ...

Many will also have had this "yes but" in mind when they heard the 2nd reading: "According to Paul, married people are divided, they cannot please God and their partner.

The incarnation of Jesus makes it clear that serving God AND taking care of your relationships belong together. The first commandment is to love God above all things. And the second commandment is the same: love your neighbour as yourself. And did Jesus not also say: "What you did for the least of these, you did for Me"?

Paul calls upon us to pay equal attention to God and to our partners and fellow human beings. That is why it makes sense to look back every day and see whether we have genuinely loved those around us. Because in our love for our neighbour, we can also see how much we care about God.

Jesus' concern for the rebellious man in the synagogue is a sign for us of how much God cares about us. Can we not, therefore, also put the love of God in our concern for each other?

So let us ask that we can love one another without rebellion, without an evil spirit. Let us ask that we do not continually say to each other "yes ... but ..." and thus fail to love each other. Let us ask that we dare to love one another without hesitation and without restraint. Let us ask for the grace to say 'yes' with all our hearts to each other and to God.