

Sin of Divination Second Week in Ordinary Time Monday, January 20, 2014 8:15 AM
1 Sm 15:16-23; Mk 2:18-22 (Racial prejudice is from the devil. Hatred is from the devil. Ultimately the goal is to hate God and to undo all the good God does.)

“For a sin like divination is rebellion, and presumption is the crime of idolatry.”

Very often reason and the teachings of Scripture go together, cohere, especially in regard to morality. What reason seems to require is also what the Bible requires. But there are times when what the Bible says doesn't make a lot of reasonable sense, and in those cases it's probably really good to pay attention.

One of them is this issue of divination. This is about fortune-telling, tarot cards, and that type of thing. Reason would find most of this just nonsense and therefore of no consequence, but not so. Not too long ago a woman was talking to me about her former boyfriend and she said her former boyfriend was a nice guy and she was going to get married to him; however, he practiced tarot. It's a card game; it's supposed to tell your fortune. So one night he said, “Well, I want to do your tarot cards. She said, “Well, all right.” So they sat at a table and he put out the cards and when she looked up into his eyes she saw someone else, so she said. There was a malignant, hateful stare from his eyes. So this **playing around with fortune-telling and tarot cards and that type of thing, those occult practices, really is not so innocent; in fact, it's very dangerous.** And people can get involved in it without knowing what they are doing, but they are doing something. What they are doing is **they are actually asking for help from a source other than God;** that's what it comes down to.

We are created with an ability to discern the presence of God, the power of the Holy Spirit to know what is right, but we also are capable of being deceived. And so people could think what they are doing is all well and good, but actually be deceived. What Scripture says is that **we must seek only God's help.** Now God has all kinds of angels at his beck and call, but **if we want God's help and the angels' help or the saints' help, we pray to God for that. We don't try to bypass God,** because there are spirits that are in rebellion, and that's what this is about. So if we ask the wrong source, we end up with rebellious spirits.

What's the nature of rebellious spirits? Hatred. That's what this girl saw in her fiancée's eyes and, as you might imagine, that was the end of their engagement. Hatred is the issue. The spirit of evil wants people to hate. **It doesn't matter whom they hate, as long as they hate something or someone.** You could hate the rich or you could hate the communists or you could hate the Jews or you could hate Moslems or you could hate blacks. **Racial prejudice is from the devil. Hatred is from the devil. Ultimately the goal is to hate God and to undo all the good God does.** That's the goal. But the devil takes whatever he can get. And, mind you, the word “devil” means “the one who divides,” *diabolus*, the one who divides. Satan means “the adversary.” So this is talking about **a spiritual adversary, a spiritual divider,** working in the universe trying to undo all God's goodness. For what reason? No one knows for sure. You could guess it's pride, undoing all God's good. And we see it everywhere.

Recently I read a wonderful book by Cecil Williams, who is a black minister who talked about growing up in Texas. We may think of racial prejudice as a form of snobbery, and

sometimes that comes across that way, but in Texas it wasn't. Men would run after blacks with clubs just because they hated them. It's totally irrational. It is the work of the devil. Sadly, many of these clubbers probably think that they are Christians, and they probably believe in Jesus. Well, that kind of belief is useless. **The kind of belief that is salvific is the belief that accepts all of Christ's teachings and especially his will to please the Father.** And the will to please the Father, as the opening prayer says, is to **acknowledge all of the Father's children as brothers and sisters. If we don't do that, we are not pleasing the Father, and our faith actually is useless.**

Faith, hope, and charity are the greatest virtues, but **only charity is really of God in the sense of is God.** God is not faith, but God is love. Faith is great. It is the opening to the graces of God and the hope in God's promises, but it leads to love or it's useless. That's why James says, "Faith without good works is useless, because **good works are from love**, true good works. Now there could be phony good works that aren't really from love, but that's another matter; then they are not really good.

So we go back to the Book of Samuel and we find out this **spiritual warfare was going on from the beginning**, and this attests to it. It's an unusual testimony to it. Now **we are used to physical consequences from our actions.** If you fall on the ice, you break your leg. You fall out of a tree, you break your neck. Those are the physical consequences. You have sex, you might get pregnant—physical consequence, married or not, physical consequence. God doesn't save us from falling on the ice. God doesn't save us from falling out of a tree. God doesn't save us from becoming pregnant if we do those things that create pregnancy. Well, **this is a different kind of consequence. If we appeal to a force other than God for knowledge, for wisdom, for knowing what to do, God won't save us.** We have put ourselves beyond his reach, so to speak. It's not actually beyond his reach, but it's beyond his will because we have chosen to go against it. That's what it means here. "For a sin like divination is rebellion, and presumption is the crime of idolatry." Worth thinking about!