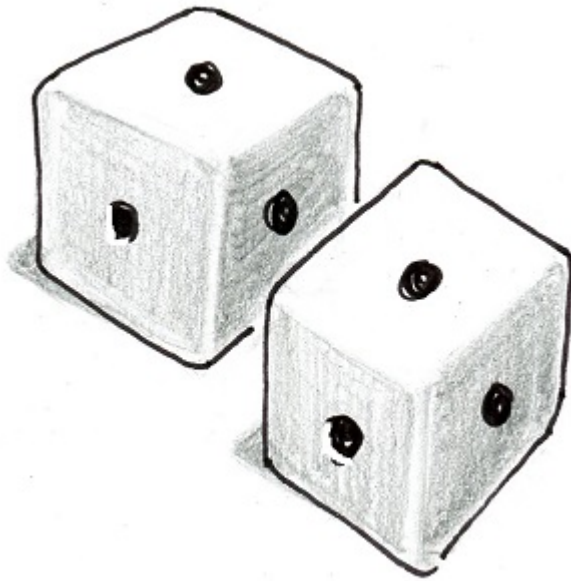


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by Pat Marrin

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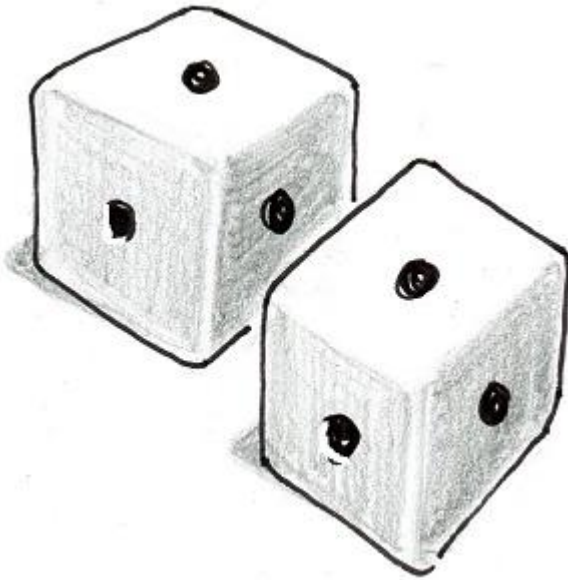
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January 26, 2020

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“If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand” (Mark 3:24).

*2 Sam 5:1-7, 10; Mark 3:22-30*

In today's passage from Mark's Gospel, Jesus responds to his critics, who have accused him of colluding with Satan to drive out demons. He rejects their faulty logic and their refusal to recognize the power of God in his exorcisms. “How can Satan drive our Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.” Their resistance to his message of conversion has blinded them to the obvious presence of the Holy Spirit in his astonishing miracles and dramatic expulsions of unclean spirits.

Jesus reinforces his point with a parable about a strong man whose house can be plundered only if he is defeated and bound. Jesus has in fact defeated Satan, and a sure sign of this is that all of Satan's agents have been routed. God's kingdom drives out the kingdom of Satan, and to say that Jesus is using Satan against Satan is both ridiculous and a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Thus, the familiar saying has come down to us about the fatal flaw for any house divided against itself and the importance of unity for any house that wishes to survive crisis.

It may seem a coincidence that today's Gospel is being proclaimed around the world as an historic impeachment trial proceeds in the United States. At the start of each session, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court leads the members of the Senate in reciting the “Pledge of Allegiance,” which is only one sentence long but summarizes the essential claims of our form of government: “I pledge allegiance to the Flag of

the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

Is God’s Word offering wisdom to a nation badly divided as it tests the very framework of checks and balance to right itself in a time of crisis over the rule of law? Will a partisan spirit poison the process, and will demonization replace the central charism of a republic committed to unity in diversity? We do not know the outcome of this crisis for the long term, only that our heirs will someday look back at a critical juncture in the history of our nation. If we make safe passage, it will be because of heroic political wisdom, but also because of God’s blessing on an historic and ongoing experiment in self-governance for the sake of liberty and justice for all.

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