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“Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste” (Luke 11:17).

Gal 3:71-14; Luke 11:15-26

Jesus understood that his differences with critics were more than a battle of words. They were about different spirits. The coming of the Kingdom of God was not an appeal to change ideas but an inner revolution of heart. He described it as yeast, a new spirit that must replace all other spirits to begin the transformation from within. Jesus' ministry began with exorcisms, the driving out of alien spirits to make room for the Holy Spirit. It had to be total since contrary spirits cannot coexist.

Jesus drove out evil spirits to liberate people from an even deeper and more infectious force that invades human nature itself and rules with fear and selfish desires that deceive and divide people, sow distrust and thwart community in order to protect its own control and power. Satan's influence was revealed in the fact that people were convinced that Jesus could drive out evil because he was using the power of evil, an absurd premise. His exorcisms were in fact a sign that Satan had been defeated and his minions scattered.

Jesus also understood that conversion can be reversed if people did not engage the new spirit fully. An empty self only invites the return of evil. We have the saying, “An idle mind is the devil’s workshop” to illustrate this. People suffering from addictions to drugs and pornography know well the vigilance and support needed to sustain their progress to freedom not just *from* something but *for* something greater. A weak moment can bring their addictions flooding back with great humiliation and discouragement.

The saying, “A house divided against itself cannot stand,” was adopted by Abraham Lincoln as he waged a civil war to free the American promise of equality from the poisonous contradiction of slavery. That struggle, which continues to this day, is both a social and spiritual battle that will be resolved not just by laws but also by a national conversion of heart.

Prayer is essential to maintaining a lively sense of the Holy Spirit within us. We are in relationship, and like other relationships, we are always aware that what we do influences not just us but our whole network of family and friends. Being faithful to them helps us to be faithful to ourselves.

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