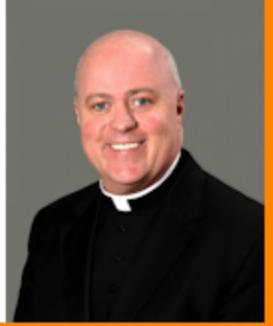


Father Chapin's Homily



SEPTEMBER 30, 2018 – Sons of Thunder

Today we continue in the Gospel of Mark.

At that time John said to Jesus “Teacher we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to prevent him for he does not follow us.”

John of course is the brother of James.

They are sons of Zebedee.

And of course, Jesus calls them both SONS OF THUNDER

So, I was driving down the highway the other day and this big motorcycle gang passed me.

And motorcycles made me nervous.

Not that I think they are going to hurt me, but news flash, people on motorcycles ... WE DON'T SEE YOU.

And anyone who rides knows that.

So, they are going by.

And they very much look the part.

You know big long beard looking tough and ready to rumble.

Of course, they all had on their uniforms.

Much like I wear a uniform.

So, they are all wearing leathers and all riding Harleys,

And they all had patches sewn into the back of the leather jackets.

And, I was surprised to see a CROSS and the name SONS OF THUNDER.

Which is kind of the ANTITHESIS of what you would expect to see from a biker gang.

And I thought, “Well maybe I could join this gang. You know, get patched in.?”

If they would have me.

Sons of Thunder.

A nickname Jesus gave to James and John.

Sons of Zebedee.

Jesus had a habit of giving his disciples nicknames.

Of course Peter is PETRA which translates as rock.

But to James and John the name BOANERGES of SONS OF THUNDER.

So let's get to it.

Where are we?

Gospel of Mark, Chapter 9.

What has just happened?

Well nothing less than a MIRACLE, the likes of which had NEVER been seen.

In the history of the world.

The Transfiguration.

Who saw it?

Peter James and John.

Not only that but ALL the disciples had been given power to HEAL.

To cast out demons.

So immediately after this SEISMIC EVENT we call the Transfiguration Jesus, James, John, and Peter come down the mountain.

As they were coming down, Jesus told them not to tell anyone what they had seen until after the Son of Man had been raised from the dead.

So, it says.

They kept that matter to themselves all while questioning, what RISING FROM THE DEAD meant.

Which was an EXCELLENT QUESTION.

But it was a question that they did NOT ask.

So watch this.

After the PEAK mountaintop experience,

Which we call the transfiguration, or METAMORPHI, when your insides literally come into the outside.

And of course Jesus's inside is light so he GLOWS.

So here after this mountaintop experience they walk into the valley and what is the FIRST thing they run into?

A problem.

And that's kind of how life is isn't?

One moment you're on top of the world and the next moment you got an issue.

Here we have a commotion.

A situation.

It's an argument between the disciples and some Scribes.

Jesus shows up to ask what they are arguing about and is interrupted by the Father of a demon possessed boy.

Which, by the way, often great opportunities for ministry show up in the form of an interruption.

So, the Father says, “I asked your disciples to drive it out, but they were unable to do so.”

And Jesus, CLEARLY agitated says ...

“Oh, faithless generation, how long will I be with you? How long must I endure you?”

Bring the boy to me.”

And when they do, the spirit threw him down and he was convulsing and foaming at the mouth.

So, Jesus asks, “How long has this been happening?”

All throughout his childhood the spirits have been throwing him into fire and water trying to kill him.

And then here it comes ... but IF YOU CAN DO ANYTHING,

Please have compassion on us and help us.

And Jesus STILL frustrated, NOT with this Father mind you, but with what he is looking at here says IF YOU CAN.

Everything is possible to the one who has faith.

And I LOVE this response.

I DO believe. Help my unbelief.

That is a refrigerator quote for you right there.

I do believe. Help me with my unbelief.

That very nicely encapsulates our relationship with Jesus.

I do believe, help me with my unbelief.

As the winds of trouble blow our birthday candle of faith quivers in the wind.

And we cup it.

But remember what Jesus says.

EVERYTHING is possible for the one who has faith.

So Jesus IMMEDIATELY heals the boy.

Later, when they get alone the disciples approach him with their own frustrations.

Remember now these same disciples had very recently been SUCCESSFUL at casting out demons.

So, they ask Him WHY could we not drive it out.

Which was a good question.

And we have some clues here already.

When Jesus showed up what were they doing? They were arguing with the scribes.

But what were they arguing about?

Well, scripture is silent to this.

But let's go into our imagination and consider their situation.

They had attempted to cast out this demon in the name of their teacher Jesus, and it didn't work.

And the Scribes are here saying "You can't cast out a demon in your teacher's name. Who do you think you are?"

You do not have that kind of power.

Maybe they said "Well we have done it before." "Oh yeah? When?"

So an argument ensues.

And they begin to question their own power.

Then Jesus shows up and he says, "Oh faithless generation how long will I be with you?"

How long will I endure you?”

Now he is NOT talking to the crowds right here.

He is talking to his own disciples and refers to them as A FAITHLESS GENERATION.

They had SEEN him walk on water.

They had SEEN him feed 5,000.

THEY THEMSELVES have been given power to heal and cast out demons and had done so.

But here we are.

Their faith is shaken and they ask WHY could we not drive out this demon?

And Jesus simply says,

“This kind can come out only through prayer.”

So, what does Jesus really mean by that?

This kind can only come out through prayer?

Well, let’s consider where this all started.

I would suggest the bedrock of our problem here.

The origin of our trouble,

Is PRIDE.

I imagine when that Father first brought the boy over to be healed they thought to themselves,

I GOT THIS.

I’m a HEALER.

A walking talking EXORCIST.

My guess is that they started to believe in THEMSELVES.

But now they realize that they had NO power.

ZERO.

And the heckling from the scribes makes them realize it even more.

So, I am thinking that when Jesus said,

“This kind can only come out through prayer,” he is not so subtly suggesting that they get back in touch with the source who has all the power.

And, the ONLY way they are going to get in touch with that power is through prayer.

Now if you recall last week there was an argument going on about WHO was the greatest?

When Jesus questioned them about this He sat them down and said,

“If ANYONE wants to be first they need to be the LAST of all and the SERVANT to all.”

The thing about PRIDE is that it DIVIDES.

And NOT only does it divide, it KILLS their ability to carry the message.

This kind can only come out through PRAYER

In other words you need to locate your HUMILITY.

Which is not easy to do if you are trying to figure out who is the greatest.

So there we are.

We have successfully set the table.

Let us pull up our chair to the 9th chapter of Mark.

So, Jesus has been talking about HUMILITY,

And about how we need to be SERVANT to all.

And John, one of the Sons of Thunder, says,

Teacher we saw someone driving out demons in your name we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us.

Now before we go on, let's take a closer look at these Sons of Thunder.

If someone called me a SON OF THUNDER,

If I got PATCHED IN that motorcycle gang,

I would wear that name with great pride.

But interestingly, at least to me, is when you consider the etymology of the word it originally came out of Hebrew and was later translated into Greek before it made its way to English.

The root word SONS OF RAJAS.

And RAJAS is translated as,

QUARRELLSOME,

EXCITED,

RAGE,

NOISY,

TROUBLED,

Sounds more like that biker gang.

You know someone with strong feeling and likes to express them.

We all know someone like that,

Quick to argue,

And quick to become incensed or to disagree.

So, if you consider it in THAT light, it is easy to see how Peter, James, and John would quibble a bit.

And of course today we have John INCENSED and ENRAGED because someone had the gall to drive out demons in the name of Jesus that was NOT one of them.

So apparently, John has not learned the lesson of Humility.

And of course, James and John are no better.

They have the gall to ask if they can sit on his right and left when He comes into his Kingdom!

WHAT were they thinking about here?

And Jesus presses back asking,

Are you sure you can drink from the Cup of Suffering that I am going to drink from?"

And they say, WE CAN.

Can you imagine what Peter and the other disciples are thinking about right now?

I can see Peter gritting his teeth now.

Once again PRIDE always DIVIDES.

Later, we find James and John, these SONS OF THUNDER, wanting to call down FIRE on a Samaritan town that did not welcome them.

And Jesus looked at them like WHAT?

Where is this coming from?

PRIDE WILL ALWAYS DIVIDE!

Where does that come from?

Well it comes from the Garden and the first LIE that was ever told.

If you eat of this fruit, you will be as GOD and you will have the power.

So what John is saying, this SON OF THUNDER, is that WE got the power

And NO ONE else can use it unless they follow us!

And Jesus replies,

Do not prevent them. There is no one who can perform a might deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me. Whoever is not against us is for us.

And then he goes on to say something very interesting.

Anyone who offers you a cup of water in my name will surely not lose his reward.

Now I think that is interesting.

Jesus is contrasting a guy who is CASTING OUT DEMONS in his name to anyone who is offering a CUP OF WATER in his name.

So back to our Son of Thunder as he quarrels and rages.

Kind of sounds like the history of the church.

It was with us at the very beginning of the church.

Heck even BEFORE.

Quarrelling ... and WHAT is the root of quarrelling?

PRIDE, and PRIDE always DIVIDES.

We have all heard the old saying that PRIDE goes before the fall.

We first see this with Lucifer.

The Angel of light intoxicated with the PRIDE, in his OWN power.

Decided he was going to build his OWN kingdom OUTSIDE of God.

So, he continues to build that kingdom brick by brick to this day.

Beginning with the BIG LIE.

Oh surely you won't die.

You will be AS God knowing the difference between good and evil and that sounded good.

Especially the being as God part.

And with THAT came the fall.

And we have been falling ever since.

When Paul addressed the early church in Corinth,

Brother and sisters, I can address you NOT as people who live by the spirit, but as people who are still worldly and mere infants in Christ.

I gave you milk and not solid food because you are not yet ready for it.

Indeed, you are still not ready for it, because you are STILL WORLDLY

For since there is JEALOUSY and QUARRELLING among you are you not worthy.

Are you now acting like mere humans?

This line is as valid today as it was the day it was first written.

PRIDE. It always divides and it is the biggest hammer in Satan's tool box.

He uses PRIDE to DIVIDE.

It is called divide and conquer.

Jesus gave us the power and the authority to carry his message.

And through the centuries this Body of Christ has been split again, and again, and again.

There is a new denomination popping up every day.

40,000 denominations in this country alone.

J.C. Ryle, a theologian who lived in the 1800s had this to say about the epidemic of denominations.

Men of all branches of Christ's church are apt to think that no good can be done in the world unless it is done by their own party and their own denomination. They make an idol of their own peculiar ecclesiastical machinery and can see no merit in other. To this intolerant spirit we owe some of the blackest pages of church history.

Christians have REPEATEDLY persecuted other Christians for no better reason than for what is going on here with John.

Teacher we saw someone driving out demons in your name. We tried to prevent him from doing so because he does not follow us.

John, this Son of Thunder, with ALL his passion is trying to start the FIRST denomination.

And Jesus says to him there is NO such thing.

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in me to sin, it would be better if a millstone was put around his neck and he was thrown into the sea.

That my friends is a bad day for anyone.

Nothing grieves me more than when I hear, “Well I am not religious, but I am very spiritual,” and the reason is because some Son of Thunder put their finger in their face and drove them away from the Good News.

Denominations focusing ALL their attention on what they do NOT agree on and NOTHING on what they do.

There are whole ministries DEDICATED TO DIVISION.

And like a large mirror the Body of Christ has been smashed into millions of pieces.

And for all those religious folk out there hear me when I say PRIDE is a dangerous thing.

PRIDE killed the faith of the disciples as they tried to heal that little boy.

PRIDE kept the faith of the disciples WEAK all the way till the end.

And PRIDE will keep you from knowing your God.

It is the FATHER’S WILL that we carry the message.

We can’t carry it if we don’t know it,

And we can’t know it until we know HIM

So, the question becomes WHICH side are you on?

Have you caused someone young in faith to stumble with judgment and intolerance or even rage?

Have you fallen under the belief that you, in and of yourself, have power because of your rigid beliefs?

Are you trying to offer meat to those who are only capable of milk?

There is NOTHING wrong with being a SON OF THUNDER and passionately sharing the Good News if you remember from whence the power comes.

Years ago National Geographic had a story of the fossil remains of two Saber Tooth Tigers locked in combat.

One had bitten deep into the leg bone of the other.

A thrust that had trapped both in a common fate.

The cause of the death of these two tigers is clear.

As clear as the cause of the eventual extinction of their species.

When Christians fight each other, EVERYBODY LOSES.

Paul writes in Galatians 5:15

If you keep biting and devouring each other, watch out, because you will be destroyed by each other.

The body of Christ is clearly under attack.

ANYONE who is awake can easily see that.

But what is NOT as obvious is that the ATTACK comes from within

There is a battle raging in you.

But Jesus has already claimed the victory.