

**Weekly Gospel Readings**  
**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Mesore**

**Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit**  
**The Unpardonable Sin**

*“Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”*

On this Sunday, the third Sunday of Mesore, the Church reads from [Mark 3:22-35](#). This reading unfolds shortly after Christ had performed remarkable signs and wonders. While performing miracles, the Scribes and Pharisees leveled various accusations against Him, including the claim that He was possessed by Beelzebub.

Hilary of Poitiers observes that “the Pharisees' jealousy escalated.” When they faced Christ's remarkable deeds that surpassed human limitations, they avoided admitting His divine nature by “committing a greater wickedness of treachery.” They were unable to attribute His works to a man, so “they refused to confess them of God, and claimed that all of his power against demons was from Beelzebub, the prince of demons.” Here we see how jealousy blinds the heart to the goodness of God and to the inherent grace He bestows upon others. St. John Chrysostom similarly remarks that envy is a passion “more grievous than any other, for it makes war not upon enemies, but upon those who are our benefactors.”

In response, Jesus employs parables to explain to the Pharisees that He cannot be possessed. He presents the analogy that a divided house cannot stand, and Satan, divided against himself, would be brought to destruction. This concept holds spiritual significance. Just as a house refers to a dwelling, our bodies, referred to as “the temple of the Holy Spirit” ([1 Cor 6:19](#)) by St Paul, must remain undivided in their love. Jesus underscores this by emphasizing the impossibility of serving two masters since “you will either hate the one and love the other” ([Mt 6:24](#)). St Augustine further explains that while one may not hate God, disregarding Him and presuming on His goodness constitutes a danger we must avoid.

Jesus then explains that “no one can enter the strong man’s house and plunder his property unless he first ties up the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.” ([Mk 3:27](#)). Our Lord Christ here is proclaiming His authority as a conqueror over the devil. St. Cyril the Great interprets this verse, stating that the term “strong man” refers to Satan, while his “house” symbolizes his dominion on earth. The “property” within this analogy represents those following Satan's lead. In parallel comparison, just as the Saints are referred to as “sanctified vessels and consecrated garments,” the ones following the devil can be termed “the devil's vessels and attire,” as they “partake of his evil and guile.”

Christ then speaks of forgiveness, declaring that every sin and blasphemy may be forgiven, except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This passage has often caused confusion, but the Fathers clarify its meaning. St. Athanasius teaches that the unpardonable sin is not a single word or utterance, but a persistent, willful rejection of the Spirit’s work in the soul. St. Gregory the Great elaborates that if a person despises the very Spirit who grants repentance, he cuts himself off from the source of forgiveness—not because God refuses mercy, but because the sinner refuses to receive it.

Finally, the passage closes with Christ's striking words when told that His mother and brothers are outside looking for Him. His response, however, is somewhat confusing, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, this is My brother, and sister, and mother" ([Mk 3:34-35](#)). Nevertheless, many Church Fathers explain this verse to mean that we can be like "mothers," "brothers," and "sisters" to Jesus through preaching Him. St John Chrysostom notes that Jesus is presenting a new concept of relating to Him, not through physical relationship by flesh and blood, but rather by doing the will of God, His Father. Also, St. Augustine beautifully adds that we are like Christ's "mother" when, through faith and obedience, we conceive Him in our hearts and bring Him forth in our actions.

May we learn to reject jealousy and unrepentance, to love God with an undivided heart, to be filled with His Spirit, and to live as true brothers, sisters, and mothers of Christ by bearing Him faithfully in our lives.

#### Sources:

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- St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Luke*
- St. Augustine, *Sermons on the New Testament*
- St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*