

Wednesday of the Twenty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 4:38-44): After Jesus left the synagogue, he entered the house of Simon. Simon's mother-in-law was afflicted with a severe fever, and they interceded with him about her. He stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up immediately and waited on them.

At sunset, all who had people sick with various diseases brought them to him. He laid his hands on each of them and cured them. And demons also came out from many, shouting, "You are the Son of God." But he rebuked them and did not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Christ.

At daybreak, Jesus left and went to a deserted place. The crowds went looking for him, and when they came to him, they tried to prevent him from leaving them. But he said to them, "To the other towns also I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent." And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

"He laid his hands on each of them and cured them"

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Today, we are facing a great contrast: people out in search of Jesus and Him healing all kinds of "sickness" (starting with Simon's mother-in-law); at the same time, "demons also came out from many, shouting" (Lk 4:41). That is: on one side, goodness and peace; on the other side, evil and despair.

It is not the first time we see the devil being “driven out” that is, escaping from the presence of God amid shouting and expostulation. Let us remember the demon-possessed man of Gerasenes (cf. Lk 8:26-39). Yet, it is surprising that, here, it is the same devil that “comes out” to meet Jesus (though, admittedly, quite furious and angry, for God's presence was disturbing his shameful tranquility).

How often, too, we think that finding Jesus is just a nuisance! It bothers us having to attend Mass on Sundays; it flusters us to remember how long it is since our last prayer; we are ashamed of our mistakes, but we do not go to the Doctor of our soul begging for forgiveness... Let us ponder whether it is not our Lord who has to come out looking for us, when we are “reluctant” to leave our little “cave” to go out and meet He who is the shepherd of our souls and lives! This is simply called, half-heartedness.

This behavior has a diagnosis, though: apathy, lack of tension in our soul, anguish, disorderly curiosity, hyperactivity, spiritual laziness about matters of faith, pusillanimity, desire of being alone with ourselves... But there is also an antidote: to stop contemplating one's navel and getting down to work. To take the small commitment every day to devote a short while to look and listen to Jesus (this is what we call praying): Jesus did it too, for “at daybreak, Jesus left and went to a deserted place” (Lk 4:42). To take the small commitment of defeating our selfishness in some small thing every day for the benefit of others (this is what we call loving). To take the small-great commitment to live every day coherently with our Christian life.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“The cured woman showed great virtue, and that she had profited by her sickness: she desired only to use her health for the service of Our Lord the very instant she had recovered it.” (Saint Francis de Sales)

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“In sickness we all need human warmth: to comfort a sick person what counts more than words is serene and sincere closeness.” (Benedict XVI)

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“Illness can lead to anguish, self-absorption, sometimes even despair and revolt against God. It can also make a person more mature, helping him discern in his life what is not essential so that he can turn toward that which is. Very often illness provokes a search for God and a return to him.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1501)