Monday of the Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 5:1-20): Jesus and his disciples came to the other side of the sea, to the territory of the Gerasenes. When he got out of the boat, at once a man from the tombs who had an unclean spirit met him. The man had been dwelling among the tombs, and no one could restrain him any longer, even with a chain. In fact, he had frequently been bound with shackles and chains, but the chains had been pulled apart by him and the shackles smashed, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the hillsides he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones. Catching sight of Jesus from a distance, he ran up and prostrated himself before him, crying out in a loud voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me!” (He had been saying to him, “Unclean spirit, come out of the man!”) He asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “Legion is my name... ” (...).

The demon is a "number"

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(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, Jesus Christ speaks of God’s "adversary". The beast, the power opposed to God, has no name but a number: the seer in “Revelation” tells us "666 is this number". This time, he introduces himself as a "legion". But it is a number, and it makes men numbers.

A signal? While the demon "cannot be proven", those who lived through the world of the concentration camps know what that means: the terror of that world is rooted in the fact that it obliterates men’s faces, it obliterates their history. It makes man a number, an exchangeable cog in one big machine. He is his function, nothing more. And if functions are all that exists, man, too, is nothing else but a function. Whatever is not a function is nothing. The beast is a number and it makes men numbers.

—O Lord, because You have a name and give me a name and call me by my name, I am not for You some function in a cosmic machinery. I am Your son!