Wednesday of the Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mt* 8,28-34): When Jesus came to the territory of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs who were coming from the tombs met him. They were so savage that no one could travel by that road. They cried out, “What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the appointed time?” Some distance away a herd of many swine was feeding. The demons pleaded with him, “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of swine.” And he said to them, “Go then!” They came out and entered the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea where they drowned. The swineherds ran away, and when they came to the town they reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs. Thereupon the whole town came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him they begged him to leave their district.

«They begged him to leave their district»

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
(Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, we are given to contemplate a sad contrast. “Contrast” because we admire the power and divine majesty of Jesus Christ, to whom the demons submit voluntarily (a certain sign of the arrival of the Kingdom of heaven). But, at the same time, we deplore the narrowness and stinginess which the human heart is capable of, when refusing the bearer of Good News: “The whole town came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him they begged him to leave their district” (Mt 8:34). And “sad” because “The true light, which enlightens everyone (...) came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him” (Jn 1:9-11).

More contrast and more confusion when we pay attention to the fact that man is free and this freedom has the “power to halt” God's infinite power. In other words: the infinite divine power can go as far as our “powerful” freedom allows. And this is so because God loves us mainly with a Father's love. As a Father, we should not be surprised that He is so respectful of our freedom: He does not impose his love upon us; He just proposes it to us.

God, with infinite wisdom and goodness, providentially rules the Universe while respecting our freedom; even when this freedom turns its back on Him and does not want to accept his will. Contrary to what it may seem, He does not let the world out of his hands: God always brings everything to a good conclusion,

despite all hindrances we can raise against him. In fact, these hindrances are, first of all, turning against us.

However, we can affirm: «before human freedom God has wanted to become “powerless”. And it can also be said that God pays for the great gift [our freedom] given to a being created in his image and likeness [man]» (Saint John Paul II). God pays! If we throw Him out, He obeys and goes away. He pays, but we lose. On the other hand, we come out winning when we respond like the Virgin Mary: “I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “He emerged from the womb of the Virgin like the rising sun, to illuminate with His Light the entire orb of the earth. Receive this Light those who desire the clarity of endless splendor.” (Saint Ambroise)

- “Jesus has come to give us freedom from slavery to the devil . And it cannot be said that we are exaggerating. We must always be vigilant against deception, against the seduction of the evil one.” (Francis)

- “The coming of God's kingdom means the defeat of Satan's: ‘If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you’ (Mt 12:28). Jesus' exorcisms free some individuals from the domination of demons. They anticipate Jesus' great victory over ‘the ruler of this world’ (Jn 12:31)” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 550)