

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. There are many of us.” And he pleaded earnestly with him not to drive them away from that territory.

Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside. And they pleaded with him, “Send us into the swine. Let us enter them.” And he let them, and the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine. The herd of about two thousand rushed down a steep bank into the sea, where they were drowned. The swineherds ran away and reported the incident in the town and throughout the countryside. And people came out to see what had happened. As they approached Jesus, they caught sight of the man who had been possessed by Legion, sitting there clothed and in his right mind. And they were seized with fear. Those who witnessed the incident explained to them what had happened to the possessed man and to

the swine. Then they began to beg him to leave their district.

As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed pleaded to remain with him. But he would not permit him but told him instead, “Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord in his pity has done for you.” Then the man went off and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him; and all were amazed.

“Unclean spirit, come out of the man!”

Fr. Ramon Octavi SÁNCHEZ i Valero
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Today, we find a fragment of the Gospel that might induce someone to smile. Imagining a herd of some two thousand pigs rushing down a cliff and into a lake, is a sort of funny image. But the truth is that those herdsmen did not find any humor in what had happened; they were very angry and begged Jesus to leave their neighborhood immediately.

While the herdsmen's attitude may seem logical, it is actually quite admonishing: for they would have undoubtedly preferred to save their pigs rather than have that demonized man delivered from his evil spirits. That is, first the material goods, which bring us money and ease, instead of a dignified life for a man who does not belong “to our class”. Because the man possessed by the evil spirit was nothing but a person that “Night and day among the tombs and on the hillsides he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones.” (Mk 5:5).

Quite often we run the risk of clinging to what we own and become infuriated when we lose whatever material possessions we may have. Thus, we have the farmer despairing when he loses his crop, even if fully insured or the stock market investor who gets angry if his shares go down. On the other hand, few are those who actually anguish when they see millions of human beings, many of which may live next to us, living in extreme poverty or dying of hunger.

Jesus always placed persons before anything else, even before the law and the

powerful people of His time. But, just too often, we only think of ourselves and of what we believe may bring us happiness, despite the fact that selfishness never has brought any happiness to anyone. As the Brazilian Bishop Dom Helder Câmara would say: “Selfishness is the deepest root of all unhappiness. Your own and that of the whole world.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“It is as if Jesus said: Get out of my house, what are you doing in my home? I wish to enter: Come out of this man, of this abode prepared for me.” (Saint Clement of Rome)

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“Christian is someone who has a deep desire within him: to meet his Lord with his brothers and sisters.. This is our happiness.” (Francis)

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“Mortal sin, by attacking the vital principle within us - that is, charity - necessitates a new initiative of God's mercy and a conversion of heart which is normally accomplished within the setting of the sacrament of reconciliation.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 1856)