



The Two Demoniacs: A Terrible Picture For Us

And when He was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? art Thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought Him, saying, If Thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And He said unto them, Go. And then they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts. And He entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into His own city (Matthew 8:28-9:1).

The Gospel reading for last Sunday taught us a lesson on the deep humility of the Roman Centurion, who came to ask Christ for the healing of his servant. But today's Gospel does not give us a lesson of what we should do, but rather shows us what we should avoid, what we should not do. This shows us the striking reality of the existence of the power of evil. In our time such a reality doesn't even require proof. Every day, every newspaper tells about a whole list of crimes which simply cannot be explained without recognizing that the person is possessed by an external, evil power.

Today's Gospel draws a terrible picture for us: two demoniacs came out from the tombs, "exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way" (Mt. 8:28). Christ permitted the demons to enter into a huge herd of swine. The possessed ones were healed, but the whole herd of swine jumped from the precipice into the sea. What a terrible force! A real, overt force of evil!

But here is the last verse of the Gospel: "And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus" (Mt. 8:34). And now you expect to find something gladdening: the whole town has united in order to meet the Lord. You want to think that it was faith that united them, that they, as once did the Samaritans, would ask the Lord to remain with them, would thank Him for His healing, for the salvation of two of their townspeople, and also for freeing them from the danger present when passing that way. And what happened? Yes, they asked the Lord, but not to stay with them, but rather to "depart out of their coasts!" (Mt. 8:34).

Here is the most terrible passage in this Gospel. First the demons were in two possessed men. Later, we saw them in an entire herd of swine. And then, a whole town – possessed. With what? With the passion for profit. According to Jewish law, raising pigs was unlawful, sinful. But it made money, and huge amounts of money. And here an entire herd perished. And the people seemed to be saying to the Lord: "You have only set foot on our land and have caused us such a terrible loss. What will happen next if you stay here any longer? You will ruin us completely! We see, we understand your greatness: even the devils are obedient to you! But what does that do for us? What do the two healed men matter to us? We don't need



your miracles. We need thousands, millions of dollars. You are not for us. Go away, go away at once.”

Brothers and sisters, let us examine our soul. Doesn't the same thing happen with us? Some kind of passion takes possession of us, but Christ becomes an obstacle. And in our soul, we whisper the same terrible words: “Go away from us.” May the Lord keep us from this! May our words directed to Him always be: “Come to us and never leave us.”