

Monday's Gospel: The Power of Our Lord

Gospel for Monday in the 4th
Week of Ordinary Time, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Mk* 5:1-20)

They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when Jesus had come out of the boat, there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who lived among the tombs; and no one could bind him anymore, even with a chain; for he had often been bound with fetters and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the

fetters he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out, and bruising himself with stones.

And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped him; and crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." For he had said to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"

And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many." And he begged him eagerly not to send them out of the country.

Now a great herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; and they begged him, "Send us to the swine, let us enter them." So he gave them leave. And the unclean spirits

came out, and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea.

The herdsmen fled, and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to Jesus, and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the man who had had the legion; and they were afraid. And those who had seen it told what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their neighborhood.

And as he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. But he refused, and said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he

has had mercy on you.” And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and all men marveled.

Commentary

The possessed man is a figure as fearsome as he is formidable. He is so strong that no one is able to keep him under control. He lives in a cemetery, a sinister and, for Jews, unclean place. His screams and cries of pain never cease, both day and night, and he cuts himself with sharp stones. Everyone would have shunned him, terrified by his violent reactions. And yet, from the moment of their encounter, Jesus has absolute authority over him. The man doesn't run towards Jesus to threaten him, but to beg him not to torment him.

The powers of hell have no power over Christ.

Our Lord casts out the demons with divine power. The text doesn't tell us why he allowed the demons to enter the pigs, but the destruction that follows is certainly a visible demonstration of his authority and the magnitude of the evil he has defeated.

After the departure of the unclean spirits, the man is completely transformed, and even wants to become one of Jesus' disciples. But our Lord doesn't allow him to get into the boat with the apostles, although he does give him a specific apostolic mission, which he faithfully carries out. God gives a great variety of missions to people. For us, the most important thing is to carry out the mission entrusted to us as perfectly as possible, instead of yearning for another. This man

obeyed Jesus and made known to the people in the Decapolis region the great things that Jesus had done for him, and we are told that everyone was astounded. One result of his obedience may have been the more positive reception that Jesus encountered later, on his second visit to that region (cf. *Mk* 7:31 ff.).

The entire episode shows us that there is no difficulty that God cannot overcome, and no evil that He cannot conquer. This includes every type of sin and anything a person has done in their life. The possessed man was in a hopeless situation. If such an unlikely character can be transformed into an effective disciple of Christ, there is hope for everyone.

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