



6th Sunday of Luke

The Reading is from Luke 8:26-39

At that time, as Jesus arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, there met him a man from the city who had demons; for a long time he had worn no clothes and he lived not in a house but among the tombs.

When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, do not torment me." For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him; he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters, but he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the desert.)

Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.

Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them leave. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. When the herdsmen saw what happened, they fled, and told it in the city and in the country.

Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. And those who had seen it told them how he who had been possessed with demons was healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gadarenes asked him to depart from them; for they were seized with great fear; so he got into the boat and returned.

The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but he sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

Discussion

Do demons exist?

Why we should recognize that demons exist:

The consequences of this deception are important. When we deny their existence, we deny the spiritual struggle we must engage in, or the spiritual war that Saint Paul says Christians are engaged in. If there is no war, no struggle, then all that is necessary to be Christian is to mentally embrace Christ by saying, "I believe," attend church on Sunday, be nice to others, and support social activities of the church and community. There is no need for ascetic practices to overcome forces that lead us astray. No need for prayer and fasting.

All of us sin constantly. We slip and fall. In reality, we fall into a trap set by the demons.

A demon certainly will not deprive us of heaven, but doth in some cases even work with the sober-minded. But sin will assuredly cast us out. For this is a demon we willingly receive, a self-chosen madness. Wherefore also it hath none to pity it [i.e., willful sin] or to pardon it (St. John Chrysostom, 1979c, pp. 539, 540)

So, willful sin is much worse than mental illness or demonic possession, because it is a free choice. The possessed (and, we can assume, the mentally ill) are in a good place to develop humility and thankfulness. Obviously, the willfully sinful are not.

It is said that God allows the demons to attack us for five reasons.

The first is that, through being attacked and fighting back, we should learn to distinguish virtue from sin.

The second is that, having acquired virtue by struggle and labor we should keep it firm and unalterable.

The third, that progressing in virtue we should not think highly of ourselves but learn humility.

The fourth, that having experienced in practice the wickedness of sin we should hate it with perfect hatred.

Finally, the fifth and most important is that, having been freed from the passions we should not forget our own weakness and the strength of Him that helped us.

- St. Maximos the Confessor

Our salvation is our choice!

We must choose to live in a manner that pleases God. The people of Gardarenes chose their pigs instead of Christ. They wanted to keep on doing what they did instead of rejoicing over Christ's miracles.

As we examine ourselves and our actions, we must ask God to change us for the better, to move away from bad habits and actions that go against what Christ teaches us. And we have to have the faith and courage to repent and change ourselves to lead lives that glorify God.

This isn't easy, it's a struggle. But God loves us all the more when we try our hardest to do what He wants instead of what we want.

Choose God, not the pigs!

This video will provide some tips God willing:

<https://www.goarch.org/-/be-the-bee-143-how-to-build-healthy-habits?inheritRedirect=true>