

GOSPEL PEARLS

Exorcisms and temptations

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*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 Jesus 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. (Mk 5:1-20)*

Demoniacs are wretched people, not only for the problems they suffer being possessed, as happened at the time of Jesus, but also today, because they are often not taken seriously and instead treated as mentally ill, when they really need a priest with a mandate from the bishop to be exorcised. In order to understand this problem, it's useful to watch the film "The Exorcism of Emily Rose" where medical and exorcisms are put on the same level in a legal process related to real events. The extraordinary activity of the devil, however, is not the most insidious one for our soul. Normally temptation is much more dangerous, which is part of the devil's ordinary activity. With temptation, in fact, the devil tries to pervert our will by involving it in sin, while with extraordinary activity the diabolical disturbances remain external to it, that's why there are also possessed people who have become saints. So let us pray to Jesus that there are bishops and priests ready to help those possessed but also to preserve us from ordinary

temptation.