



**The Gospel According to Luke 8:26-39**

***"...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 Christ has dominion over the devil and all the demons of hell, and the demons who possessed this man knew this, they knew who Jesus was.

The man freed from this torment glorified God, yet the people were afraid for they saw how much of a change had occurred in this man and perhaps they had given up hope for him.

Why might we fear this hope?  
Why might we fear the truth?

Because it means giving up the world for certain faith, for unshakeable faith, which is threatened everyday by the darkness of evil.

From VJ, a catechumen

**Breaking the chains does not make us free.**

On Friday afternoon, at the end of our humble reflection on today's gospel, Eliana remembered that she had really seen people in chains in her home country. It was a reality well known among the people at that time, when human behaviour was out of the ordinary or out of control. Discussing with each other we kind of agreed that some of those people who were chained to their beds (I have to recognize I heard about a similar situation in my home country as well) might not have all been possessed by evil spirits. Some of them were just ill and suffering from certain mental illnesses. However, the locals at the time would make no difference and they would treat everybody the same. Today we



are more documented and, for good reason, we are scandalized by such a practice. And indeed, some people with disabilities today are blessed with a dignified life. I say some, because others do not get the chance even to be born. It is a common practice for doctors in Canada to recommend to the parents to have an abortion if the child presents a risk of being born, for instance, with the Down Syndrome. In the past, people would chain what they could not care for, today, we let death take over. It is better not to be born at all instead of living with a disability, they say. Somehow this seems less threatening and more desirable when looking at the alternative: to live a life in vulnerability depending on the good will of others. Even though this is the place where the Gospel is preached and fulfilled.

*"And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from heaven and consume them as Elijah did?" But he turned and rebuked them."  
(from Thursday gospel - Luke 9:49-56)*

A detail of the gospel we reflected upon on Thursday stayed with us in the chapel for some time. It was related with the apostles' instinct to pray for the destruction of the Samaritan village because the people there did not receive Jesus. Most precisely John and James. John, the beloved disciple. Jesus rebukes them both, telling them that they did not know of what spirit they are made of. The instinct of man to condemn others to death for their sins is so strong in us that even the apostle, who stayed close to Jesus' breast at the supper and knew His love and His peace, could not avoid it in a moment when they experienced rejection. We all have a limit, we might say. Somehow this is true. What else can people choose if they reject God, the Giver of Life. The human reasoning here is "If you don't want to live, you deserve to die". But this is precisely why Jesus rebukes John and James and later on Peter when he tries to stop Him to take the road of the cross, the only way in which death was going to be conquered. Jesus rebukes the apostles because this "reasoning" is coming straight from the evil spirits : **"Get behind me Satan"**, he tells Peter (Matthew 16:23).

What Jesus rebukes directly is embraced too much today by our way of living and customized in secular and religious forms. This does not come as a surprise, because we see that even those who are close to Christ are tempted by it and fail at times. This happens because somehow death is not seen as something dreadful but rather something that could be an alternative to a greater evil. That's the conclusion of secular reasoning today, which was revealed to me this week by a young person who is probably going to decide later on if people in vulnerable positions deserve to live or to die. In a discussion about euthanasia in Canada and how this is explained in medical schools today, the young person asked bluntly the question: "So, do you think death is the most dreadful thing that can happen to a human being?" The question was real and honest, coming rather from ideas recently taught in schools that tell young people that death is an option like any other option. However, this is not only a secular collapse of the human right to live but this evil idea also makes layers today among those who proclaim the divine right of man to live everlastingly. The preaching of eternal life makes us at times to treat with indifference the vulnerable life we share today, minimizing the violence done to the human being by death (that leads to the

misunderstanding of resurrection itself). We are indifferent and impatient in letting others die, even assisting them, if that's what they want, because we know that death is forever conquered (The country with the biggest number of deaths in the pandemic, over the past two weeks, by percentage, had seen religious events where thousands of people would gather for veneration of a local saint, while hospitals run out of mortual bags for the deceased who, in some places, were buried with excavators).

Somehow, our belief in the resurrection resembles more and more the noble idea of the quality of life promoted by modern society. Both of them bring about in people the desire to die because the perfection promised seems to be so foreign to them in their vulnerability and so out of their reach. Unnatural and fake.

In the gospel, the people who ask Jesus to leave their lands, chained the possessed man because the evil spirits were trying to destroy him and he had become a danger for himself and for others. They did not know any better to care for the man, but they had a good instinct. Maybe that's why Jesus tells the healed man to go to the city and tell them the good things done to him by God. Today we share in the conviction of the evil spirits that somebody who does not want to live deserves to die. It is not our death that we should fear but our instinct to let others die. This is precisely what the spirits want to chase away; the care that human beings can show to each other. Chained or not chained, the possessed man would have died probably out of lack of care and indifference for human life and suffering, the great evil that we see today so clearly.

In the end, we might say that none of us is worthy of the resurrection and yet all of us can experience its reality today, without disputing it, when human care is manifested within a broken human life.

### **Conclusion through two stories from last week:**

R came just a couple of times to the mission so far. She has a problem with alcohol, she is homeless and threatened where she lives (one of the new hotels in Toronto where people with addictions are dying frequently in horror conditions). She came straight to the chapel for the first time and asked for a blessing. The second time she made a confession on the stairs of the church because she could not keep anything locked within herself. In spite of all that madness in the hotel, with her being haunted and with her addiction and her suicidal thoughts, she said with conviction that she wanted to live. She literally said so, just like we hear on Fridays at Orthros: "I will live, I will not die".

E. has been keeping a heavy burden in his soul for the past three weeks. His aunt disappeared from home. I rarely saw him so connected and distressed by an event. He prayed for her during our mission vespers and asked some of us to pray for her as well. On Friday I asked him if he knew anything about her, as we were cutting butter for the scones we make in the bakery. Yes, he said. She died. The police found her on the bottom of the lake. From our discussion I realised he did not really know her well. I guess E is special in his own way and family does not share many things with him. He could not even attend the funeral. I was very touched about his pain, his care

and his prayer for his aunt whom he really did not know. He assured his mom that he will pray for her soul at the mission.

There is hope and love for life the way we live it today, mingled with pain, sin and brokenness. That's what remains with us from the stories above.

The brokenness of life is what we are going to miss in the kingdom of heaven. When we'll learn to love without feeling pain. Without asking for healing. Without having doubts. We'll miss our imperfection and our love for something we did not know at the time but yet, we believed.

**Please pray for the sick:**

Waheeda and children; Faizah (depression); Shirin and her family; Sana and her husband (covid); Eva; Tom ;Frank, Cristina; Daniela, Gheorghe Virgil; Jerry; Delia; Ati ; Ragaie; Victoria;Prayers for Mike.Farida need prayers for her hand to heal ; Prayer for Levalin and her children ;Prayers for Roselyne and family ; Ana, Cornelia; Prayer for Leon to recover from his surgery; Jerry  
Prayer for Nikitha, Ocean, to stay away from drugs  
Prayer for Gloria, Anne, Marina, Marie, Edemene for healing  
Joanna and family GNRejoice;Romana, Colin, Michael, Peter, Henry, Joanna, George, Kelly;Tom; Marina;Sandra and her son Chris;Kumari;Susan;child James who broke his leg  
Aaron (surgery);Sylvia's ankle to be healed  
Fr Jonathan  
Tharshini and her two children  
Ann Tyron and her family  
Sandra Gomaz's children  
Amy (young mother with brain tumor)  
Paola (James's wife)  
Elizabeth to cope with putting down her cat  
Anne Brown to recover from her surgery  
Matthi (went to Montreal to get surgery where her close family can help her)  
Sameen for his eyesight  
Sophia;Amy;Swetha and children ;Levalin's children (who are regular patients at Sick Kids)  
Charitha (Dengu fever);Jitesh's parents ;Elisabeth;Demene;Carol  
Gloria (with some type of infection in her leg)  
Hawa Bibi (heart condition); Vimaladevi  
Tharsini and her child; Sana's Sister going through cancer treatment  
Ann T's husband ;  
Lynn;Michelle;Emanuel(Mani);Stefanie;Geoff;Joey;Evangelia;Sophia;Melanie;  
Césare;Tanya;Piper;Darius; Zamalk; Nelly; Nahla; Mira; Sandral ;Brenda;Anna Avairo's daughter (going regularly to the emergency room);Vol Gomaz heart condition and immigration matters ;  
Levlin's two children who are sick; Sri' ; Helen; Paul; Wafaa and Sana's sister (cancer)

**Please pray for health and salvation:**

Dave and his family; Jai's family; Anne Tyran; Prayer for Joseph to find housing  
Joseph to find housing; Lito; Mauro, Prayers for Ted's family (incarcerated son to be free)  
Dameal asking prayers for his future wife Fathima to be free from addictions  
Liz Gibicar asking prayers for her mother; Mom waiting for baby Tejasree; Prashastha  
Maria and Dingo; Crisent; Helen; Greta; Elizabeth; Dean; John; Liz; Crisent; Ann Brown; Elizabeth  
Sifie; Allen; Leon; Ricky and his family from back home for the hope of reuniting; Aaron, Anastas,  
Olivia, Gelly, Frank, Eva, George, Rebecca, Andreas, Cathyann, Reigan, Stephanie, Peter, Christine;  
Christian family from Bangladesh, Sandra, Peter, Angel, Bless, Grace, Swetha family; Atlaw single  
mom at shelter, Vernevil family; the family of Kenide; Saathiya; Sena; Vinothiny  
Yvienne; Abdul; Sakanthalathevy; Jumke; Naimi; Anish; Joshua Daniel; Maria Lolita Soliman  
Torres, Jonathan, Richard, Richard, Mary, Elizabeth, Michael, Bill, Robert, Alan, Joanne

**Please pray for the deceased:**

Willie; Dave's wife; Ana; Shirin's cousin in Jordan; Father Lawrence; Dave; Anne Tyran's father  
Edith, Sr. Mary Magdalene, Joice, BettyAnn, James, Pauanasuy Kamthasang, Maria (Covid),  
Andrei, Agostina, Carminda, Vimaladevi's sister; Sri's mother, Carol's Mother and 23 year old  
nephew passed away in Haiti. Demene's mother; Dalalzaki