



“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.”

It is hard to comprehend God departing from those who were enslaved to evil. Why does He listen to the prayer of those who were insensitive to the pain of the man who suffered? Why does He listen to the demons that go towards self destruction and fulfill the desire of those who do not want God on their land? It makes you wonder who God is. We got used to the idea that He saves us from the depths of hell, how come then does He leave today when He is asked to do so, from a land that chose condemnation over healing and life? We might hear these voices if we listen with distraction: Who is this God who does not care for His own people and leaves them condemned under their own sins? He can do everything, could he not find a way to change their habits? Can He not make Himself loved by them? Should He have stayed?

Today the gospel tells us that He does not take us out of our own misery that we chose if we do not change our heart. He might change all the surroundings, hell is conquered and taken up by heaven and yet, if our heart chooses to close in itself God doesn't become an intrusive undesired stranger. Might one say that we could suffer in heaven if we so choose to? If everything is healed and reconciled around us could we choose to be resistant to the love we see, experience and taste?

Like today in the gospel, people see the miracle and the healing but rather choose to be afraid of new life and remain within a land that is outside of the covenant with God.

In today's gospel we see that evil becomes customized and normalized in the land. Despite the suffering of the man, the community is more concerned about the effects that His presence might

have on them overall. It does not see what Eliana saw on Friday when we read the gospel: "A lot of suffering of the man. Like humanity" that's the most obvious and clear thing. We know that the community did not see this suffering, because they did not embrace the healing with joy. **They did not embrace the man.** They were afraid of the change that happened. Afraid of something new that was going to change their customs, their culture, their lifestyle. They were afraid of that. The land of Gadarenes was the land outside the law. Jesus entered there and opened to them the door to the Truth and to new life, by healing the one who was tormented the most. The land and the people were too accustomed to evil. The fear of new life kept them captive.

We know that evil is seductive and it hates life and its own. (Psalms 29:24). Another thing that we see and understand today is that evil makes itself comfortable, indispensable, while it sucks the energy out of you. It makes you think it cannot be done without. The idea of a change is scary and it brings about fear. There is no freedom and no good to pursue within the heart and outside of us. It makes you captive with a level of comfort that cannot be overcome. Its misery is seductive.



Country of Gadarenes (old picture)

Christ ascended into heaven and the disciples spread the good news. God does not make Himself “irreplaceable” but rather invites and brings around the table, He shares His body and His blood, He makes man co-creator with Him out of love and not out of necessity. He becomes man so man can become like Him.

Somebody was saying that “hate is reactionary and love is revolutionary”. We see that today in the gospel, the community reacted to the demon possessed man with chains and other coercive methods, where the love of Christ brings healing and radical change.

Love changes structures and takes down kings, it breaks your own heart. In a revolution, people might lose everything they had, good or bad, in exchange of a radical promise and an ideal that is not yet lived but only foreseen and witnessed in the lives of others. It requires, as somebody was saying today, “bravery and courage” (see the note 1), to risk everything and lose for the promise of something that we cannot completely live now.

“...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.

We met at times at the mission people from the city who fit this description. Even this week, people were scared when they noticed the woman who decided to change her clothes in the office instead of going to the bathroom. The event did not pass unnoticed within the community, people spoke about it for a few days. She was all over the place outside when Johan saw her. She was wearing torn clothes and on her feet two different summer shoes that were not her size. People were afraid to talk to her, noticing the obvious need and extreme agitation. She was high and agitated but she showed a lot of suffering, just as in the gospel, that transpired through her behaviour. One could say she did not care about people, did not care about her body or about anything else. Only God knew what she had been through and probably still is. I asked her to come inside because she needed to try the shoes and the clothes we could find for her. We offered her some tea, something to eat and a place to warm up a little and maybe rest, if she could.

In spite of her carelessness, she somehow changed when she came inside. She became aware of the place and she was able to communicate and to say what she needed. She even asked for a specific song to be played by Anthony on the piano, which he did. All this time she was still all over the place. After she received the clothes and the shoes she needed she left, before I had the chance to come back after talking to another person in need. I was really surprised to see she did not leave a mess behind. Whatever things she did not need, she put in the garbage. It was a shock to see that she cared about something.

She spent some more time outside and Shawn asked her to leave because she started to smoke something. She left without making noise, carrying two small wooden chairs with her in the streets. She tried to stop the streetcar that did not bother to notice her.

This is a scene that is almost normal in Toronto these days. Our land here is the same as the land of the Gadarenes. It is a land that legalized evil and customized indifference. At the mission we get to know these people and at times talk to them. Most of the time we are powerless seeing the suffering and the pain. More than once we heard the confessions of people who are in this “business”, saying that after everything they had seen and experienced they understood that they

were doing the work of the devil. They were terrified as they were saying that. But as we know, this demon became legalized in Canada. The law makers are comfortable around it. Some drugs can be legally bought today in any place, all over the city, while the heavy drugs are going to be decriminalized. When we see people suffering on the streets of Toronto because of this demon, we should know that this happens because of the habits and customs we have in the land that became evil.

“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.”

Most of the time people who suffer and die from addictions on the streets, whose pain and distress became a proverb and a spectacle for an audience that lives comfortably with evil, (*When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a proverb to them PS 69:11.*) are those who bear deep wounds within their heart and body from an early age. We know their story at the mission because at times they speak to us, even though we cannot comfort them. Most of them had a childhood who was not kind to them. They become poor from an early age because they were short on love and care. This wound is haunted by the evil one, trying to turn it into hate and carelessness for the other and for oneself. The drugs do almost a perfect job with that. If the land had a custom and a law that were not evil, these people would be protected and offered a path to healing and real hope. Instead, they are given vinegar and gall to drink: the poison of drugs, which is the custom now in the land. We are left at the mission with their pain in our hearts when they depart, just as it happened on Tuesday. They come and leave without any profound healing happening. We might give food and clothes so they do not depart naked and hungry. But the pain is still there, the demon still haunting their life. We feel we are losers while they try not to feel anything.

The gospel today though tells us that they are the first ones to encounter God in a cursed land. He goes first to them. Maybe He comes here for them. And they are not resistant to healing and to His love. They see and receive the hand of kindness that touches them. That gives us hope that the same kindness would touch their soul today even though with no visible healing on the outside.

While our lifestyle, the fabric of the city and the culture that changes today is asking Christ to depart from our land, He finds delight in meeting those who receive His love. Jesus does not take the man with Him, He is left in the cursed land to speak and witness the reality of the open door that could bring all of us into His promise. Jesus leaves the land but he leaves his new disciple behind to witness the new life.

P.S. At the mission, Vasiliki spends a lot of her time working unnoticed in the basement to sort and bring new clothes to people. The winter jacket that the young girl received on Wednesday was brought and folded by her. Her kindness opens a door for us in this land that has become accustomed to evil, as do all the people who bring clothes and food to us. It is their kindness that opens this door for healing in our life. They keep it open through the care shown to those they do not want to leave careless.

Note 1 - bravery and courage - the words belong to a homeless young woman who came on Friday at the mission. She has a visible disability and bright blue eyes. She speaks with an Irish accent, as far as I can tell. She has a stroller with a baby doll and she asks for blankets for it. She has a sense of humour and a light presence. She said it required bravery for her to leave her group home where they were abusive to her and to live on the streets. She loves first aid kits. On Friday she helped me to put things in order in our first aid kit.

Community life - Scarborough (Mary allowed me to share her story)

It is not unusual for Mary to visit people in the hospital or to go to funerals outside of her working hours in Scarborough. She does that through her church. They go two by two. That's why when she was asked by her friend to go to a funeral on Tuesday, that came natural to her. She did not know the person and had no other information. When she arrived at the funeral home she was shocked when she recognized the picture of the young man who had just visited the mission in Scarborough the previous week. "He had just come to us on Wednesday, after one year. I saw him outside and I went to bring him a coffee and to talk to him. To tell him we were happy to see him back. He had been living in Pickering with his family and sister for the past year. Now he wanted to move back to Scarborough. I remembered talking to him. I was shocked when I saw the picture. I did not expect that. Maybe God brought him to the mission just before he died." Mary was visibly emotional. The event was a different type of fioretti that cannot leave you indifferent. It just happened that I remembered him as well. He had come the previous Wednesday at the Scarborough mission. A calm presence in the room, as Br Luke was saying about him. You would remember his face and some kind of genuine peace.

Mary was not sure about the cause of his death. The family said he died because of a seizure. He had suffered from an illness.

On Soul Saturday we prayed for Joel's soul as we prayed for many other people who died in Toronto suddenly, many of them unattended. At times this is the only thing we can do. We are grateful for God letting us know about the loss that happens. It is within the loss that cannot be regained that we learn how to pray and receive hope. Mary shared with me the news about Joel's death on Wednesday, after the service, after we had just read from St Paul's words: ***"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions..."***

It was the prophecy of the prophet Joel that we celebrated the same day. Somehow, every year now, during the feast of the prophet we'll remember Joel who died suddenly after returning to church after one year. We'll remember and pray for his soul and receive hope.

Memory eternal to Joel!

Mission church collections of 1 Sunday : Oct 16 2022 Donations \$162, Wine \$10, Candle box \$25.15

Prayer list for the sick and those who have recovered:



Peter; Jose, George, Mihaela, Richard; Bernadette, Elisha; Kayla; Harley, Maria and Carlos; Omar; Elisabeth; Ben, Kim, Maria Becatam ;Seena; Tony, Nikitha; Dianne; Joy; Susie; Alex; Maurice; Lynn; Molly; Thomas; Varghese; Delia; Leela; Mary; Tanya; Basma; Aditi; Larry; Darius; Lori; Lisa; Cindy; Césare; Fatima; Debbie; Donald; Hermina; Råul; EK Thomas; Nebu; Evangelia; Sarah; Shelley; Bill; Ruth, Kristian and Frank; Maria; Binja ; Mike; Luke; Anusia; Lavalin's son; Sana; Father George Patrick, and Father Michael Miklos/Pani Karen Miklos; Dominique and her daughter; Mike; Luke; Arjuna; Joy; Susie; Alex; Lynn; Molly'; Thomas; Alex; Fathima; Frank; Chris; Evlokia; Mikayla and Luca; Karunawathi, Gloria, Vijekumari, Ronda, and Regina; Delia; Valerie; Tom; Traian; Peter; Marco; Kim; Tihomir; Kate; Payton Clark; Sana, and her family in Egypt; Isaiah; Mary; Sydney; Peter; Christine; Stephanie; Iulia; Jason; Sophia; Alexander; Charles; Tom; Paul; Phillip and his wife Juliet; Cristeena; Ann brown's daughter; Silvia; Jincy; Shiron Crisreen; Allain; Seena and her husband; Waheeda and children; Faizah; Shirin and her family; Cristina; Daniela, Jerry; Delia ; Ragaie; Victoria; Mike; Farida; Roselyne and family ; Ana; Cornelia; Leon; Jerry; Ocean; Gloria; Anne; Marina; Marie; Edemene; Joanna and family; Rejoice; Romana, Coline, Michael, Peter, Henry, George, Kelly; Tom; Marina; Kumari; Susan; child James; Aaron; Sylvia; Fr Jonathan; Tharshini and her two children; Ann Tyron and her family; Sandra Gomaz's children; Sameen; Sophia; Amy; Swetha and children; Charitha; Jitesh's parents; Demene; Carol; Gloria; Hawa Bibi; Vimaladevi; Fr. John and Pani Marie; Lynn; Michelle; Emanuel(Mani); Stefanie; Geoff; Joey; Evangelia; Sophia; Melanie; Tanya; Piper; Darius; Zamalk; Nelly; Nahla; Mira; Sandral; Brenda; Vol; Gomaz; ; Helen; Paul; Wafaa. Fr David; Pani Donna

Please pray for the deceased:

Joel; Peter; Fr Tony; Zatia; Tom; Fred; Shrin; Andre; Andree; Akhir; Arjuna; Dillon; Elena; Pani Mary; Rejoice`s mother; Edmund; Pani Eleanor; Fr John; Alexandru; Constantin; Robert; Fr Aurel; Georgi; Rada; Petre; Stela; William; Samuel; Debbie; John; Amy, 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; Andrei; Agostina; Carminda; Vimaladevi's sister; Sri's mother; Carol's Mother and 23 year old nephew; Demene`s mother, Dalalzaki.

October 24 - 30

Tuesday	8:30 am 7:30pm	Morning Prayer Psalms Study – via Zoom	Wednesday	8:30 am 12:30 pm 4:00 pm 6:30 pm	Morning Prayer Noon Hours Vespers/Dinner Bridges/Compline 8pm
Thursday	8:30 am 12:30 pm 2:00 pm	Morning Prayer Noon Hours Jesus Prayer	Friday	7:00 am 12:30 pm 2:00 pm	Orthros Noon Hours Jesus Prayer
Saturday	9:00 am	Morning Prayer	Sunday	6:00 am 7:00 am 8:30 am	Jesus Prayer Orthros Divine Liturgy

	<p>St Silouan Chapel at St John's Mission 155 Broadview Ave. Toronto, ON M4M 2E9 T: 416-466-1357 E: info@stjohnsmmission.org W: stjohnsmmission.org</p> <p>St Zoticos Orthodox Church at Good Neighbours Mission 193 Markham Rd Scarborough, ON M1J 3C3 T: 647-358-4105</p> <p>We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa</p>	
--	--	---

St. Silouan Chapel, October 16, 2022

7 of 7

©2022 St. John the Compassionate Mission

www.stjohnsmmission.org