

6th Sunday of Matthew 17:14-23

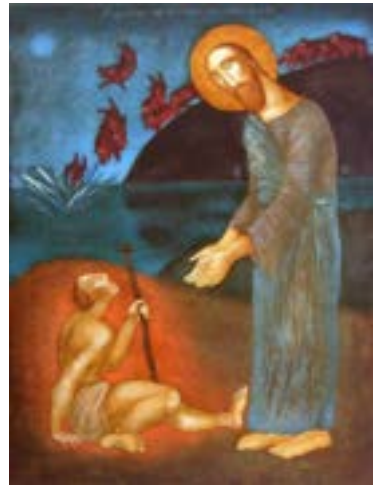
“... and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.”

One day this week, D. spent most of the time at church. He just came out of jail, and he needed, apart from food, other essential items to help him walk the streets, like socks and underwear. “I stayed here today because I know I’ll do nothing wrong here. This time I really want to change my life. Maybe you don’t remember, I came here in the past but I did not stay too long. I was not in the right mind. I was saved when they put me in prison” (he said that smiling). It took me away from the addiction I was struggling with. It saved my life. In prison, this time, I read from the bible every day. I want to live now; I don’t want to go back to drugs.” His friend, who spends every morning at mission confirmed later. “He wants to change this time. His mind is set to do good.”

It is not the first time we hear or see in people the desire to change radically. Most of us do, but somehow, we often come short of it. Something was different about D. though. Something in his eyes. They looked different, like a living witness of something they have seen and cannot be taken away. The eyes of a person “who was in his right mind”. Somehow the reality of changing became secondary, because his eyes have seen already the mercy of God and they have believed Him. Something in his heart revealed a unity between the soul and the body because his being has already been embraced by the grace of God. Anyone could have a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven by looking into his eyes. The reality of faith from his eyes would burden any skeptical soul with the fear of God. It really felt that way because what he saw changed already his heart and made him fall in love with the Beloved. “I want to be baptised,” he said. “You know, not as a child, but now, as a grown-up man.” He said all these words with peace and without drama. As a conclusion he reached after having lived a complex life.

“But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles ...” (today’s epistle -St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians 1:11-19)

D. was not the only one this week that came with a witness and a desire to make a covenant with the Beloved. A former “street worker” wants to take a vow of chastity. As a sign of how her life has changed for the past 5 years. As a way to show gratitude to God and as a witness to the reality of His love to whom she now feels bound to. Another young person came to ask for a schedule of prayer because she left behind an abusive relationship and now she wants to pray



with us. Another sister who is battling a serious mental illness comes to pray in the chapel for those who are afflicted, just as another young soul comes to visit us and to share a good change in his life. With an involuntary sense of humor, he asks: "I look better now, right? Can you see that? I feel much better.... yeah, that's how I feel... You can see that, right?"

All these confessions come at the price of tears from those who make them. There is a genuine love for good in their life and a covenant about to happen. The tears are the seal of the vows about to be taken.

What is really happening?

There is repentance with the poor. Repentance with those who need a physician.

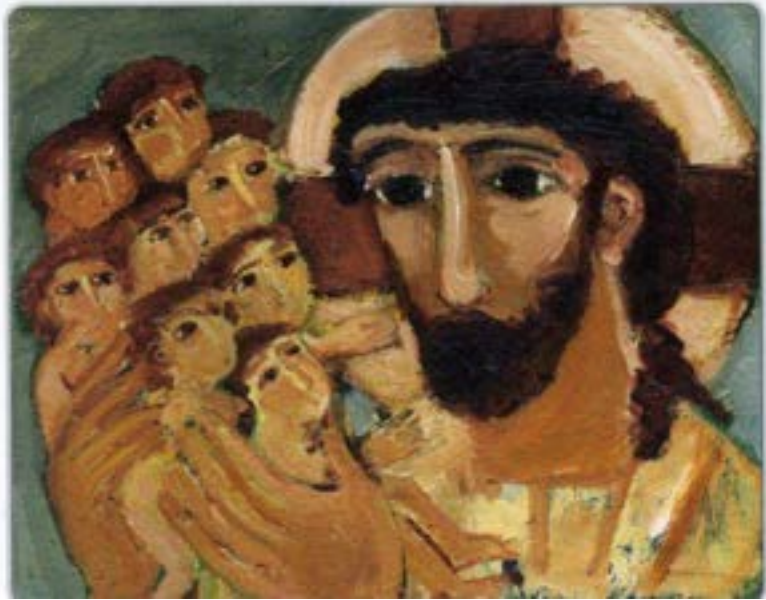
What we see and live collectively today, is a mind and will of man set towards self destruction. This is nothing new. It happened before during the history. Just that with time, the price seems to be higher and higher. The will to do evil seems to reign. The evil spirits have taken over and reign over a humanity that throws itself into the fire and into the abyss of stupidity just to destroy innocent lives. We see that in Canada, where there is a growing will to impose more the penalty of death for the innocents. A desire to do evil lacking in the knowledge of good. And we see it so much now in too many places where war is without control. There is no more hope in those places for anyone to intervene and stop the madness. A final word was left with us when we completed the trip. There is no hope now of a mediation. The only thing left for us to do now is to pray. And we do pray for the repentance of those who have the power to release and crucify the innocents, but their hands remain unclean. As we find out in the gospel, the repentance of the kings happens rarely and when it does, it is only when they are defeated (see the prayer of Manases). And now everyone thinks they are victorious. Without repentance there is no real peace and life ahead of us. Only the prayer of the sinful lips that does not reach the heart set to do evil.

"Even now," declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

(Joel 2, 12-14 – celebrated this week on Thursday)

We pray and look for repentance in those who have the real power, just to realize that the door of compassion opens in the life of the poor and the afflicted. What we experienced this week at the mission is the real repentance from a contrite heart. From a heart that has been afflicted by sin and forgotten. A repentance from a heart that suffered in silence, like in the gospel, because the evil spirits took away the word from within given to them. This is the heart that Jesus approaches in this madness where the evil spirits speak on behalf of man with Him. This is the heart that Jesus chooses to encounter and to invite to communion in a land where the disunity

of evil spirits leads to destruction and death. This is the heart that becomes faithful and obedient to Him. If there is a door in today's madness that leads us towards peace and life, it is the repentance of the poor who are close to us. They invite a humanity that is going down the cliff to join them at the feet of Jesus. It shows us a way and it gives us real hope. A movement that is not of us, but of the Holy Spirit, who calls us to repentance, to encounter with the Son of God and to communion with each other. A unity in Truth that forgives all our sins. It is for the poor and the afflicted to answer this call first. We see it at the mission. The real hope and the reality of faith. The desire to do good and set your mind aright. The tears that seal the covenant even when the poor are defeated. Within their heart they have sealed the love with their repentance. We need to come closer to them and to be inspired, to choose the good revealed to us. They lead the way through the city, where the reconciliation of the community happens, away from the cliff that seduces the crowd with disunity until self destruction. There is a path, and the poor are already walking on it. The movement that requires repentance of the heart because in this generalized madness the one who was afflicted has seen the face of God. A movement that gathers all the innocents within the arms that bear the sign of the nails, before and after the Resurrection that bear the signs now.



Mission church collections of 3 Sundays: Oct 1/8/15 2023, Church Donations \$1,120.50, candle box \$47.40

From Friday's reflection on the gospel:

There were many things spoken on Friday when we reflected on the gospels, that are going to stay with us for a long time. But maybe what was not spoken was even more profound. Because, as Anthony said, it was too personal for many people. The experience of being lost and recovered by the mercy of God. It was only the gospel that echoed this silence from the soul of those who know that repentance requires tears and blood. Even though, as someone said, somebody who went through this full heartedly, recovery is a gift. It is Christ who liberates you. Who empties you of evil spirits, in order to be filled with the grace of God. "We people are a

Who empties you of evil spirits, in order to be filled with the grace of God. "We people are a

vessel, we could be empty, full of evil spirits or a vessel for the Grace of God.” (somebody on Friday)

There was a unity in the room of those who know this truth from their own life. A unity that recognizes within the reality and power of sin the Word of God who heals you. And together they can reflect on the details of life and explain the gospel to us.

All the legions tormented one human soul who was resilient to death. The drove of pigs could not take the torment anymore and killed themselves by jumping off the cliff. Even the unclean animals, as somebody observed, could not host the unclean spirits, whereas the heart of a man endured the torment in silence. And this is the place where God acts to empty us of the evil that controls us today. Within the heart of the marginalized who suffered in silence.

Finding the light (by Elisha)

Many of us find ourselves,
In the chains of sin,
That wrap round us,
Like venomous snakes

And following the Nativity Star,
And rejoicing on glorious Pascha

Together.

We come to believe,
We are but captives forever,
Until our sorrows will
Have us take our last breath,
Without ever knowing
A single act of kindness,
Done for us without expectation.

The red door open to all
Not a one of us ought
To know isolation and loneliness
But only good Christian friendship
And Love.

Do we still know how to love?

So, we shut up our hearts,
in the caverns of darkness
Inviting it willingly in,
Until we no longer have
Any control over that,
Which binds us,
So, what can ever set us free?



Christ teaches us how,
And we need only
To give our burdens to Him
Who will also teach,
The already certain and delighted
Among us how to walk always
In humility and hold our hand
And lead us out of bondage,

Being reborn not of water,
But of the Holy Spirit,

To the Light

October 23-29

Tuesday	8:30 am 7:30 pm	Morning Prayer Psalms Study – via zoom	Wednesday	4:00 pm 6:30 pm 8pm	Vespers Bridges Compline
Thursday	8:30 am 12:30 pm 2:00 pm	Morning Prayer Noon Hours Jesus Prayer	Friday	7:00 am 12:30pm 2:00pm	Orthros Noon Hours Jesus Prayer
Saturday	9:00am 2:30pm	Morning Prayer Reader Vespers	Sunday	7:00 am 8:30 am	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@stjohnsmission.org W: stjohnsmission.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, September 24, 2023

5 of 5

©2023 St. John the Compassionate Mission

www.stjohnsmission.org