

10th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Today's Gospel passage tells us that Jesus healed a young man from the power of an evil spirit. From the description of this event, we see that no one could defeat the devil except Jesus. This young man distanced himself from God and exposed himself to the destructive influence of evil forces. When his father asked Jesus to heal his son, Jesus responded quite sharply and negatively to his request, "Rode is unfaithful and corrupt. As long as I have to be with you" (Mt.17:17).

Christ assessed the condition of the sick young man and pointed out the main cause of his illness as the root and consequence of the sins of infidelity and depravity, the action of an evil spirit on him.

The situation of the demon-possessed young man fully reflects the realities of today's life. The lives of many people are no different from the lives of this young man. Today, many people in the world are Christians and Christianity is widespread on all continents of the earth, but sin and evil in the world has not decreased.

There are various explanations for who the demons are, which the Scriptures also call evil spirits. Some theologians, including the American researcher, J. Pember, claims that these spiritual beings are the souls of the extinct pre-Adamic race. Others are convinced that the origin of demons belongs to the realm of the secret that God did not allow man to reveal.

According to the Bible, demons are the lowest echelon of "spirits of wickedness in heaven," sent by Satan to harm mankind. They, themselves, are invisible to the human eye, but they can be detected by how they affect humans. Evil spirits, according to exorcists, can affect people both mentally and physically, that is, they cause both harmful, emotional experiences and disorders, and physical ailments.

Although the service of exorcism is extremely important today, it loses its meaning if it consists only in the relentless struggle against demons, and does not aim at the salvation of the soul. "Do not rejoice that the spirits obey you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven," Jesus said to His disciples, as the evangelist, Luke, testifies.

Therefore, the "work" of a priest who casts out demons is not only to free the possessed from his "spiritual parasites" at one point, but also to take

care of the "immunity" from this contagion and from demonic attacks in the future.

By breaking the commandments, man rejects God's will and begins to listen to the voice of his own will. A person that is corrupt, who is dissatisfied with everything, wants to impose his will in everything, the whims of the body. They lack the strength to stop at one thing and new passions are constantly emerging. Although man acknowledges the existence of God, but at the same time seeks earthly things, wants to have them as a backup option. Just in case, if there is no help from God, he will be able to turn to them. The Apostle, James, calls such people duplicitous, double-minded people who want to please God and the world. "What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in you members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is in vain that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us?' Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind" (James 4:1-5, 7-8).

Dear brothers and sisters, our prayer is not always strong enough for us to ask God for the necessary graces and to solve life's problems easily and quickly. When there are problems of life and health, that are beyond our human and spiritual capabilities, then we should come to church to pray with a priest who has a gift from God to help people, strengthen their prayer, supplement their efforts to combat problems and diseases. What our prayer cannot solve can be supplemented by a priest's prayer.

Therefore, let us place our hopes in the eternal God and believe that he who hopes in God does not depart from Him empty-handed.

I wish you all peace and a good day.

Fr. Serhii Deiak