



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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THE GADERENE DEMONIACS

EPISTLE: The Reading is from St Paul’s Letter to the Galatians [1:11-19] But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man, For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, not did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.

EXPLANATION: The remark that this gospel is neither “according to man” nor “from man”, serves to rebut the opponents’ accusations

that it has no divine authority but is merely a teaching advocated by one group of Christians without official status. **(1:11)** Paul explains to the Galatians that not only was God the ultimate source of the gospel, but also Christ Himself served as the channel by which it was conveyed to Paul; there was no human intermediary. Apostolic tradition is grounded in divine **revelation** from Jesus Christ. Just as the Twelve received the gospel directly from Christ, so did Paul. He entered their unity in consensus and mutual submission. **(1:12)** Although he persecuted the Christians and tried to destroy the church because of his Pharisaic zeal in Judaism, he explains that people are not called by God in accordance by former conduct, but by God's grace. **(1:13-14)** Paul cannot determine the reason why God decided to reveal His Son in him. It was God's will that Paul preach to the Gentiles, and that is all Paul needed to know. The decision had been made long ago while he was still **"in his mother's womb"**. He was **"set apart"** for the purpose even before he was born. God's sudden and unexpected move to appoint Paul an apostle to the church he was persecuting was a unilateral and incomprehensible action on God's part. **(1:15-16)** Paul insists that after his call by God, through grace, he did not consult with any human authorities (**"flesh and blood"**), regarding the gospel, not even the apostles in Jerusalem. **(1:17)** As a true apostle, he submitted himself to the church and her apostles rather than elevating himself. He understood that he must teach the same gospel as the other apostles. **(1:18)**

GOSPEL: **The Reading is from St Luke [8:26-39]** Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, *"What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not*

torment me!” For He had commended the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, *“What is your name?”* And he said, *“Legion,”* because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. They also who had seen it told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned. Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, *“Return to your house, and tell what great things God has done for you.”* And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

EXPLANATION: The symptoms of the demoniac in today’s gospel are the symptoms of those suffering from illness of the soul; who have completely withdrawn from society; who are fierce and full of hate and hostility toward people; who are possessed by the demons of impudence and fear; who are full of greed, guilt, revenge, resentment and malice. Such illnesses are definitely of a demonic,

devilish and destructive nature. It strips them of the capacity to serve God and others. It limits their capacity to live in harmony with other people. It cripples their ability to make a successful marriage. It makes them more prone to becoming alcoholics, addicts, criminals and often leads to suicides. The problem in today's society has become widespread with so many people suffering from psychosis, schizophrenia, paranoia, neurosis, anxiety and depression. Psychiatry is complaining that it cannot possibly cope with the immensity of the mental health problem. It has become accepted by many people to consult a psychiatric therapist on a regular basis because of the great upsurge in mental illness in most developed countries; to the extent that psychiatrists have now become high priests and are worshipped as if they have all the answers. Yet people fail to realise that only Jesus can provide that inner peace and stability in their lives. He is the Divine Physician. All they need to do is turn to Him and He will cure them. Did He not say, "Come all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give rest?" It is when people cut themselves off from the root of their being, God, that their life turns meaningless, empty and sick. Man was made for God and only in Him will the inner emptiness be filled to overflowing with purpose and peace. The Gadarene Demoniac was fierce, hostile, full of hate, but Christ healed him so that in the end we find him, "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed in his right mind." Cannot Jesus do the same thing? Cannot He take a guilt-ridden person and fill him with peace, a drifting, purposeless person and fill him with eternal purpose, an unbalanced person and restore him to stability. Can He not take even today a person possessed of the demon of insanity and restore him to sanity, leaving him, "**sitting at His feet and in his right mind**"? And has not Jesus placed in our hands today the healing power of prayer, love, friendship, listening, caring, forgiveness with which to reach out to help restore and heal the suffering Gadarenes of today? **(8:26-39)**