

12 Μαρτίου 2017

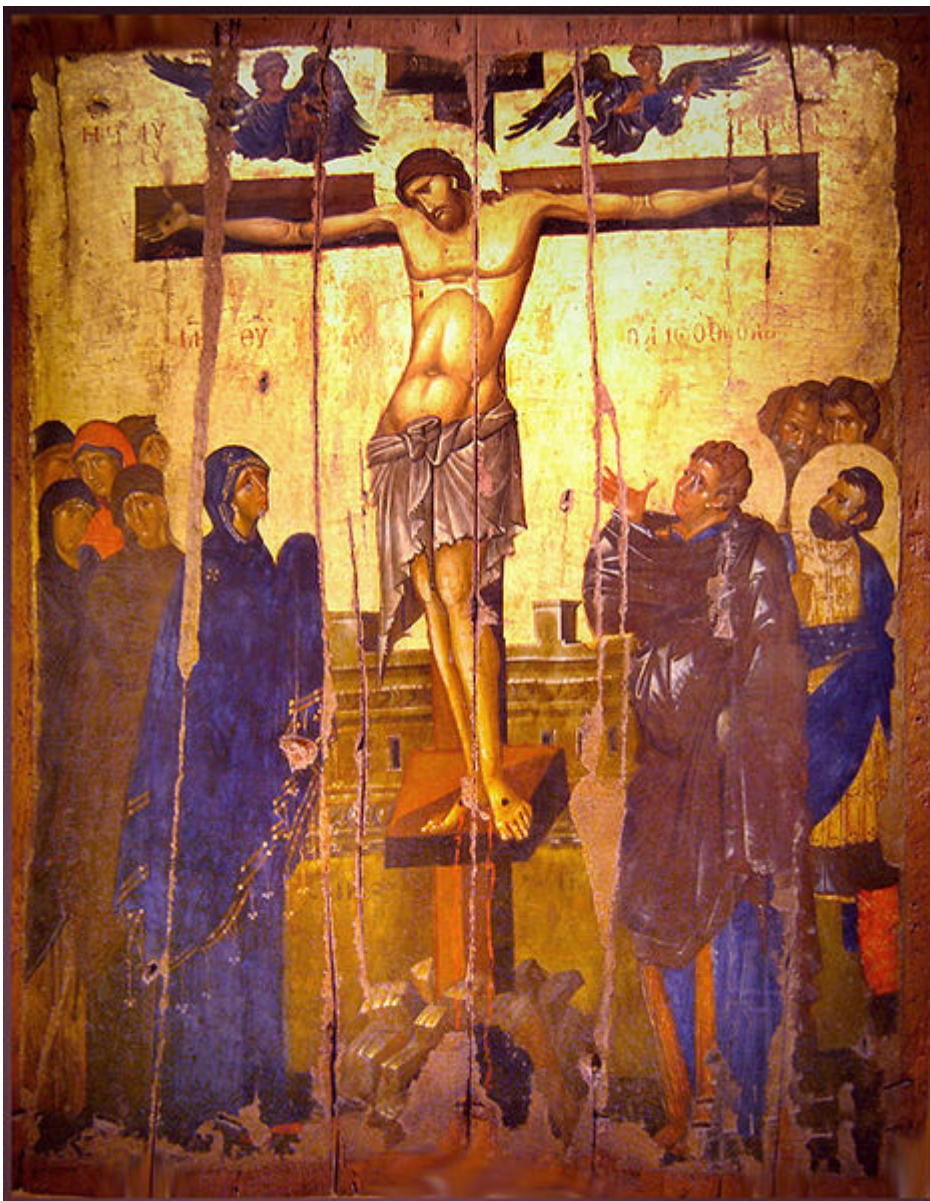
Love Keeps Evil Away (Fr. Cornel Todeasa)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)

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“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and “your neighbor as yourself.”



Icon of Crucifixion (God's Love)

Passing through the country of Gadarenes, our Lord came across a young man who

had been taken over by a “legion” of devils for a long time. The Gospel says that the evil “often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; but he broke the bonds and was driven in the wilderness” (Luke 8: 29). He was a danger to the people in the town and also to himself, for “he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs” (Luke 8:27). He was in a rage to kill himself. Death appeared to him as a solution to rid himself of the legion of devils that possessed him. However, his trying to kill himself was nothing else but the final submission to the evil forces that had taken over his body and soul, for the ultimate goal of devils is to destroy the persons they possess.

The Gospel reading describes how the young man was freed by our Lord. Although it doesn't tell how the young man became possessed, it does give us a hint to what might have facilitated his possession.

At their request, the Lord allows the “legion” of devils to enter a herd of pigs that is feeding in the fields. Entered by the devils, the herd runs “violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned.” What happened to the legion of devils after that? We can only imagine that they became devils “lurking in the water” as they are identified in one of the exorcism prayers preceding the Holy Baptism.

When the “multitude of the surrounding region” saw what had happened, they asked the Lord to leave their region. The Lord might have done some good in their region by healing the young man, but it came with a price of the material loss of their animal crop.

The fact that the multitude did not invite the Lord in their midst and that now they made the request to the Lord to leave their region and their lives, is, I believe, the situation that facilitated the young man's possession by the devil. Where God does not reside (dwell), or from where God is expelled – any place that is not filled by the presence of God and His Holy Spirit – becomes a vulnerable space that is immediately targeted by the devil. Obviously, this young man was the weakest link in the godless country of the Gadarenes. Among a people where God was not welcomed, a young man was taken over by evil. Not only was he taken over, but he became the home base for an organized legion trying to gradually take over the entire country.

After the young man was healed, he begged the Lord that “he might be with Him.” But the Lord sent him back to be a witness to his people saying, “Return to your own house, and tell what great things God had done for you.”

The young man is a witness not only to his people but to all of us. We are all

targeted by the devil and under dangerous attack at all times. *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood,”* writes St. Paul to the Ephesians *“but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6: 12),”* The young man from the country of the Gadarenes is a witness that we need Jesus not only to exorcize and heal us, but also to protect us against the powers of the evil one.



St. Paul

What must one do to become victorious in this spiritual warfare? We find an answer in a conversation the Lord has with a lawyer in the Gospel of Luke. Inquiring about eternal life, the Lord directs the lawyer to the teachings of the law, asking him, “What is written in the law?” The lawyer replies, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and “your neighbor as yourself.” The Lord says, “You have answered rightly; do this and you will live (Luke 10: 25-37).”

The answer is in one word. Love. Love is the matrix of our true lives. “If we have no love,” says St. Paul, “we are nothing” (I Cor. 13: 2). There is no life without love, but only emptiness. Therefore, we must fill our hearts with the true love of God and

of our neighbor so that they overflow with the grace of God and have no vacant room for the evil one to target or occupy. We must welcome the healing power of God to fill our hearts with his love, to open our minds to His true knowledge and to guide us to always follow Him.

When our minds are not preoccupied with the true knowledge of God and the wonders of his creation, they become an easy target to the temptations of the evil one. Let us not be distracted by society's peripherals, which only vacate Christ from us, but fill up our hearts with love for our fellow human beings. Let us strengthen and start new friendships, forgive and ask forgiveness, and help the needy around us. We must practice love every day in order to keep the evil away.