

My dear brothers and sisters, the theme that runs through the Gospel is that Jesus speaks with **Authority**. Here we can see how Jesus showed his authority to teach. Even when he took Holy Scripture as his sources, he was different from other teachers. Because he spoke in his own name ... **“but I say to you”** (cf. Mt.5:21-44 and 7:28-29). Our Lord Jesus Christ speaks about human relationships; he teaches in a simple and authoritative way because he speaks of what he knows and testifies to what he has seen (Jn.3:11). The Gospels give us many accounts of miraculous cures, among the most outstanding of which are those of people possessed by the devil. Jesus' victory over the unclean spirit, as the devil is usually described, is a clear sign that God's salvation has come: by overcoming the **Evil One**. Jesus shows that he is the **Messiah, the Savior, more powerful** than the demons.

According to St. John Chrysostom, devil is called unclean because of his impiety and withdrawal from God. We can see from the Gospel that demons possess a supernatural type of knowledge and therefore **they recognize Jesus as the Messiah** (Mk.1:24). Jesus preached in this way to educate the people that he is not kingly or political Messiah. Thus, Jesus first awakens their interest by performing miracles and gradually, through his preaching giving them a clearer understanding of the kind of Messiah he is.

In today's Gospel, the man in the synagogue suddenly flipped when Jesus taught. “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? **I know who you are—the Holy One of God!**” (Mark 1:24). Jesus' teaching, the word of God, challenged him and showed him up for what he was and likewise challenges us and shows us up for what we are, throwing, by shining light on the dark corners of our lives. **Prayer and spiritual reading can reveal to us who we really are.** Have you ever considered your distractions in prayer? They may have something to say to you about opportunities for growth in your life. The Lord can also reveal our need of his healing outside of prayer. Our dreams are said to be expressions of our wishes, desires and emotions so they can also reveal who we are before the Lord. Sometimes an event in our lives or our reaction to it may show us up for who we really are when we see our weakness and lack of holiness laid bare. In whatever way our true self is revealed to us, such moments of self-revelation are opportunities for grace, opportunities for the Lord to work on us and heal us and transform us into the holy and wholesome person we are called to be. Such a painful moment occurred in the life of that man in the Gospel today.

Jesus cleansed the man of the evil spirit. But it was not easy for the man. The spirit convulsed the man and came out of him with a loud cry (Mark 1:26). There is a sense in which we **“convulse”** when overcoming evil. If overcoming our attachment to sin were easy, we would all be saints by now. The problem, of course, is that we don't want to face the spiritual “convulsing” involved in spiritual growth. It is easier to remain as we are because such necessary spiritual “convulsing” is **letting go of our ego and our attachment to sin**. That is precisely why we shy away from it, we don't want to let go of our ego and attachment to sin. The Psalm today gave a warning about not letting go of our egos **“if today you hear his voice harden not your hearts”**.

Finally, dear friends, Jesus' displays of power over evil spirits are signs of his identity as the prophet Moses described in the first Reading. Jesus is not only speaking with authority, but he has power to change our lives for good. Let us turn to him for spiritual growth, so that we may move from weakness to holiness. He has power to change our darkness into light. may we invite Jesus into our lives today to clean hearts from all impiety and anything that withdraw us from God, so that our heart will be a temple of the Holy Spirit. Amen!