

JANUARY 14, 2025 FATHER ERNESTO DE CICCIO

This week we're back into Ordinary Time, green. But there's nothing ordinary about Ordinary Time. Some of us like to refer to it as an extraordinary time. Because we get to read these wonderful stories from the gospel about the life of Jesus. His words, his miracles. And we see one of the miracles happening today. Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum. And he's able to expel this evil spirit from this man who had been tormented. We know, sadly, that there's evil in the world. And it doesn't often take the form of possession like we see in the movie 'The Exorcist'. Okay? That's Hollywood. But there are bad things that torment us. Whether it's an actual evil spirit or maybe a bad thought or a bad memory, or a bad feeling that we've been carrying around for too long.

Where do we go? Is there anywhere that's safe? This story teaches us that even in the synagogue the evil spirit came in. Do we think we're going to lock ourselves up in our churches and will be kept safe and sound all the time? Oh, we should all know that sometimes bad things even happen in the church. Whether it's in the congregation or even with the priests. So where do we find our protection? You don't have to wear amulets. You don't have to have incantations, burn the incense and the candles, and ring the bells. Jesus... simply spoke... "Be silent and come out of him." And this individual was healed.

Sometimes we go looking for magic. You know, as a Catholic Priest I'm approached by even a number of non-Catholics at times who feel tormented by something. And that's because they see the Priests as having the real magic. Well, what do you want me to do? Give you some holy water? We don't need to be looking for magic, is my point. Even if it's white magic instead of black magic. We need to simply turn to Jesus. Oh, we have the angels and saints who can help us too, of course. But do

we recognize how powerful Jesus is? And do we understand, first and foremost, that our God is greater than any evil?

What do we think - it's an equal battle going on? God is greater, never doubt that. And all we have to do is call on the name of Jesus. We're tormented, we're in trouble, we're afraid. "Jesus, help me." That holy name of Jesus is so powerful. And why do we go looking for magic? We have confession. We have the eucharist, the sacraments of the church, that God has given us. And some people think, "No, that's not good enough, "I need a special ceremony of some kind." We are blessed because Jesus never abandons us. He knows the troubles we face whether they're emotional problems, physical problems, financial problems, relational problems. You name it, Jesus knows. And Jesus makes all the difference. And that's what we're being taught.

This man who was possessed entered the synagogue and the evil spirit with him. Maybe that's because he knew that Jesus was there and Jesus could save him. And, of course, Jesus did. So learn to just call on the name of the Lord. And maybe you might have to do it 100 times a day, or who knows how many times in your life. But never tire of calling on Jesus. Because he never turns a deaf ear to us. He hears us and answers us. What are we praying for? We're not praying into some vacuum when we do the general intercessions. We're asking Jesus to hear us and answer us. And he does. He heals our broken hearts and our broken spirits. He comes to our help and removes from us all those things that torment us.

So as we hear this story of a miracle of 2,000 years ago, let's remember that no matter what is troubling us... And it's not going to be demonic possession usually... but whatever we're carrying in our head and in our heart that we need to expel, let's ask Jesus to rebuke it, to cleanse our

heart, and mind, and soul. And to make us... healthy... in here once again. Call on Jesus Christ. He will never forget or abandon you.