

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in OT Cycle B, “CHRIST – The Exorcist”**  
Deuteronomy 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 7:32-35, Mark 1:21-28

Fr. Gary had recently finished his course in Rome on **The Solemn Rite of Exorcism** – when shortly thereafter, he was approached by the parents of a 27-year-old young woman by the name of Maria. Upon SEEING THE DEFEATED LOOK OF THE PARENTS BEFORE HIM, he was reminded of the many people he’d come to witness in Rome during his practicum – **he saw in their TIRED EYES and SLUMPED SHOULDERS the same look he’d grown accustomed to by all who accompanied victims seeking deliverance through the Official Prayers of the Church...**

Ever since she was 17 years of age, Maria recalled hearing voices saying to her: “*You belong to us...*” Obviously worried, the parents initially sought recourse from a **Witch Doctor** who performed a ritualistic exorcism that seemed to help for a number of years. Without much fanfare, Fr. Gary reached for a three ring binder that contained a variety of **BASIC MINOR EXORCISM PRAYERS**, he raised his right hand towards Maria and began to pray:

**“Kyrie eleison, God, our Lord, King of ages, All-powerful and All-mighty, you who made everything and who transform everything simply by your will. You who in Babylon changed into dew the flames of the ‘seven-times hotter’ furnace and protected and saved the three holy children...”**

Maria's **BODY STARTED TWITCHING**, and with her legs now **ROCKING BACK and FORTH** – he continued on – “**We beseech you to make powerless, banish, and drive out every diabolic power, presence, and machination; every evil influence, malefice, or evil eye, and all evil actions aimed against your servant Maria.**”

Maria **SUDDENLY SCREAMED!!!** she began **THRASHING VIOLENTLY ON THE COUCH**. Then, much to Father Gary’s amazement, her facial muscles tensed in such a way that her appearance completely changed, and **she took on the FACE of a Viper...** Even her mannerisms became snakelike: **Her eyes were now DEAD BLACK DISCS that bore straight through him while her tongue shot in and out like a snake’s...**

-----

Whenever we hear ACCOUNTS like that – or take in a movie like **Peter Blatty’s The Exorcist**, or **The Exorcism of Emily Rose** – IF WE ALLOW OURSELVES to experience the dramatic encounter where the Fallen Spiritual Realm and the Material Order **COLLIDE** – we just might feel the hair rising on our arms while a tingling awakens somewhere in the back of your neck... You might even sleep with the lamp on for a number of nights in a row...

-----

A 2012 a SURVEY from the **Public Policy Polling on the American population** in the area of Religion and Public Life revealed the following when it came to the question on ‘**Belief in Demonic Possession.**’

**44%** of Americans over 65 years of age **BELIEVED IN DEMONIC POSSESSION**,  
**57%** of Americans between the ages of 47-65 also did – and, among the youngest group surveyed, that of American **18-29 year olds: 63% BELIEVED IN DEMONIC POSSESSION.**

That’s some INTERESTING DATA especially given the fact that that Younger Generation of 18 to 29-year-old’s for the most part, want nothing to do with the Church or what they call ‘Organized Religion.’ Makes one wonder – **are our younger people experiencing THE PRESENCE of things they just can’t explain for themselves?**

Kind of like what we have in today’s Gospel passage? A man with an Unclean Spirit cried out: “**What have you to do WITH US Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?”**

-----

Before we go into this, we have to **FIRST OF ALL ESTABLISH SOME CONTEXT** for this gospel passage taken from the Gospel of Mark. The Gospel of Mark is the first of the four Gospels to come into existence around the year 65 A.D. and it’s recognized for its **succinct brevity**. The center of this gospel is **THE PASSION NARRATIVE OF OUR BLESSED LORD** and everything else you find before that event, is simply a very Long Introduction that leads to the climax!

That's what today's Gospel passage is, **it's the beginning of the *LONG INTRODUCTION*** that will culminate in the **PASSION and DEATH** of our Lord that describes for us how things went down on Jesus' First Public Appearance whereby He formally enters a Synagogue on this Holy Day of the Sabbath in order to ***PREACH, TEACH, and PERFORM WONDERS!***

We're told that the people responded in this way: "**They were astounded at his teaching for he taught them as one having Authority.**" That word **AUTHORITY** is important for us because the Greek that's behind it is pronounced '**EXOUSIA**' and it refers to '**AUTHORITY WITH POWER**' – a type of **DYNAMISM** that shakes you to the core – the people were ASTOUNDED!!!

And it's while ***THIS POWER IS EMANATING*** out of from His words that something within the **COSMIC ORDER** reacts and immediately a **Demonically Possessed** man cries out: "**I know who you are: The Holy One of God!**"

Our Lord rebukes him on the spot: "**BE SILENT, AND COME OUT OF HIM!**" The Unclean Spirit convulsing the man and crying out in a loud voice **CAME OUT OF HIM**. And all were amazed!!!

-----  
There's LOTS going on here on a whole variety of levels:

First of all, there's a **CRYPTIC PROPHECY** we need to recall right at the beginning of Creation – whereby God declares the following to Lucifer: "**I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers: he will bruise your head and you will strike his heel.**" (Genesis 3:15)

Our Jewish brethren have always interpreted that passage as a **PROPHECY ABOUT THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH!** They always believed that when the Messiah would come – proof of his **BEING THE ONE** would be found in his ability to overthrow **THE POWER OF THE DEVIL**. Matter of fact, that is one of the ways that people would know that this was the Messiah, because he would undo the effects of the fall so that humanity would no longer be under the power of the serpent, which Ancient Jews interpreted to be the devil.

That's what's happening here in the Synagogue! The demon recognizes not just that Jesus has power over him but that **PART OF JESUS' MISSION IS TO DESTROY THE POWER OF SATAN!** It is to destroy the power of the demonic, to destroy the power of the fallen angels over sinful humanity. But the **time for this TRUTH** to be revealed is not now - NOT on the **FIRST DAY OF HIS PUBLIC APPEARANCE!!!** And so our Lord silences him for proclaiming who He is so early in the game...

-----  
But now let me take you to **THE CLIMAX** of our Lord's Public Ministry, the night of his Last Supper, soon **following his Betrayal and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane**, our Lord is taken before the High Priest and the whole Sanhedrin court as they look for evidence to have him executed.

We're told: "**Some brought forth. Evidence. But even on these points, they were conflicting.**" And so Caiaphas, the **HIGH PRIEST** rose from his chair and he put this one question to Jesus: "**Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?**"

Does THAT QUESTION – the one question posed to the Christ that **SEALED HIS FATE ON THE CROSS** – does that question sound familiar to the answer spoken by a demon on the day of our Lord's first public appearance? You bet it does... "**I know who you are: The Holy One of God!**" Except now **the time is right...** And so our Lord responds: "**I Am – and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right have the Power and coming with the clouds of Heaven.**"

The High Priest tore off his robe while exclaiming: "What **NEED** have we of Witnesses – **YOU HEARD THE BLASPHEMY!**" And the Gospel says: Their verdict was unanimous – **He DESERVED TO DIE...**

-----  
As he was there 'Whispering in the ears of Adam and Eve' at the beginning of Creation, as he was there on 'Day One of our Lord's Public Appearance,' as he was there when the Son of God descended into Hell for three days following his crucifixion, so **HE CONTINUES TO WAGE WAR upon mankind by means of lies, deceit, and murder.**

I like the way Dominican theologian **Antonin-Gilbert Sertillanges** describes the ARTIFICE OF THE DEMONIC:

"He need only ENTER INTO THE STREAM OF OUR OWN INCLINATIONS, when we treat lightly things that lead us astray; **he has only to press against that which already totters, to hold back that which seeks to rise...** His influence spreads like a poisonous gas, which we inhale without even knowing it..."

Thankfully for us, **IN CHRIST the in-breaking of God's Dominion, God's Authority, God's Power and Kingdom** now subsists within our FALLEN WORLD – one that is neither dominated nor governed by God – but by the power of Satan, by the power of evil, by the power of Demonic Forces that ardently seek to separate human beings from one another and from God.

.....  
**WHEN PAUL WAS BEING HELD CAPTIVE IN CAESAREA**, King Agrippa had him brought in for questioning and during that time, Paul revealed what Christ said to him on the road to Damascus. This is the only time throughout all of the Scriptures where Paul gives us this **INCREDIBLE INSIGHT** about what the Lord said to him at that very moment.

I share it with you because my prayer for us all is that these words will **ASTOUND US WITH TRUTH and AUTHORITY**. For Paul's Mission back then continues to be our Mission as FOLLOWERS of the Master today:

"I have appeared to you for this reason: to DESIGNATE YOU AS MY SERVANT and as a Witness to what you have seen and what you will see of me...  
**OPEN THE EYES OF THOSE TO WHOM I AM SENDING YOU** – turn them from **DARKNESS to LIGHT** and from the **DOMINION OF SATAN to God**; that through their Faith in me that may obtain the forgiveness of their sins and a portion among God's people." (Acts Chapter 26, verses 16-18)