

## Reflection

Feb. 3, 2020

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A year ago, in February 2019, I had my first experience of offering a Reflection such as this. To my dismay, as I began to prepare, I discovered that the Gospel of the day was Mark's account of the man possessed by a Legion of demons and his encounter with the herd of thousands of swine.

Imagine my surprise when, a week ago, I opened the Missalette and found the exact same Gospel for today. There were the swine, looking up to see what I'd do with them this time. Some of my friends found this quite funny!

This time, the text prompted other reflections: how does someone come to know Jesus, really *know* him? In today's episode, we are presented with not the person, but the demon or "unclean spirit" who speaks. He calls himself "Legion." He seems to know who Jesus is. "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me!" He invokes God to protect him from torment.

Here we have a man considered possessed or mentally ill, making an act of faith in Jesus as Son of the Most High God; in the one with power greater than his, as Legion. Legion has been driven out, the man, now clothed and in his right mind, wants to follow Jesus. He is told instead, to go and tell all that the Lord has done for him.

It is an unusual story, but so are others we have had recently; other people who have their first encounter with Jesus. Yesterday, in an unusual departure from the Sunday liturgy, we celebrated the feast of the Presentation. For a moment, Jesus is again an infant and he is encountered for the first time by elders in the temple who have waited all their lives for "the consolation of Israel." In today's Gospel, the *unclean* spirit Legion, shouts out, begging Jesus not to torment him. Yesterday, Simeon who has been told by the *Holy* Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord, arrives in the temple just in time to hold the infant and praise God with that wonderful prayer: "*nunc dimittis*"—now Lord you may let me go in peace.

Of course, as you know, there was also another person in the temple at that time: Anna, the elderly prophetess. (We are told that Anna was 84; in those days that was considered elderly.) Anna never left the temple, and she came forward "at that very time" and knew the child.

While Simeon speaks to Mary about Jesus' role and the sufferings she herself will undergo, Anna is "speaking about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem."

From these two vignettes, what do we learn about how Jesus comes to be known? Of our three, the demoniac and the elders in the temple, none had ever met Jesus. The Demoniac certainly would not have given him a thought. Simeon and Anna could hardly

wait for his appearance. What these unexpected witnesses have in common, is that they were all turned into missionaries. The now sane demoniac is sent home to tell of what has happened to him. Anna is already speaking of the child to everyone in the temple. Simeon is telling Mary what to expect.

Perhaps none of us can identify with anyone in these pictures—except perhaps Anna. But each of us has, at some time met Jesus, and come to know him.

We may ask ourselves, “When did I really meet Jesus?” When did I begin to know him?