

I. A **Parisian** approached a tourist admiring a sculpture at a Cathedral with this odd question: "Do you notice anything **amusing** up there?"

- "Why no," answered the tourist, "it is **inspiring**."
- "Look **closely** at those figures," directed the newcomer, pointing to a group that represented a **soul being weighed** in the scales of justice.
- "Notice the angel standing on **one** side and Satan on the **other**. The devil gives the **appearance** of wanting fair play and honest justice, doesn't he?"
- "Yes," admitted the traveler, "but I don't see anything **funny** about that." "Look **under the scales**."
- Sure enough, under the scale on the side of Satan was a little demon **pulling the scale down**.

That's how the devil works.

- If we decide to give up a certain vice or evil habit, or if we decide to follow Christ more closely, Satan seems to **step aside** and admit his defeat.
- But it's only a **façade**. In reality, he begins to work secretly from **another angle**.
- This is why it is so important for us to **always stay on our guard**, spiritually speaking.

Temptations can come to us at **any time**, even right after a spiritual victory, since the battle is **always** going on.

- We **cannot avoid** being involved in this battle - the devil is just too interested in making our lives miserable, now and forever, by **separating us from God**.
- But Jesus was able to expel the demon from this possessed man **easily and definitively**.
- And he is also able to **give us strength** to overcome the temptations that plague us.

II. Imagine how the man possessed by the unclean spirit in today's Gospel would have felt after this dramatic incident.

- He had been **tormented by an evil presence** perhaps for **years**.
- His life was a series of **momentary lulls** amid constantly recurring and violent demonic **attacks**.
- He could take **little relief** in family life or friendships, because they **couldn't protect** him either.
- He had no way of carrying on a **normal, peaceful** existence.
- To a great extent he had lost his most **precious** gift, freedom.
- His only hope in the face of such a hell on earth was the **direct intervention of God** - a miracle.

In some way, **each one of us** can relate to that situation. We are not **possessed**, but we all have our **sufferings and temptations**, that seem to have **power** over us, just as the devil had power over this man - until **Jesus** came along.

III. Three things especially can help this strength **flow more freely** in our lives.

1. **Stay close to Christ**. - It was because this man was close to Christ that Jesus was able to expel the demon.

2. **Stay close to the truth** – the devil's main weapon is **deception**.

- He **manipulates** our selfish tendencies by spreading lies and half-truths.

- we face the truth about **ourselves** by confessing our sins, failures, and weaknesses,

3. Stay close to others in need.

- The devil is the **lord of selfishness**, and Christ is the **Lord of love**.
- When we resist our selfishness by **serving others**, whatever their need may be, we **weaken** the devil's influence in our lives.

Every Christian is a **spiritual warrior**. Today, as Jesus renews his commitment to us in this Mass, let's renew **our** commitment to **him**. Let's promise him that this week we will do **something specific** to help us stay close to Christ, close to the truth, and close to others in need.