

HOMILY FOR THE 22nd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Glory Be To Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!

Have you seen, like I have the funny commercials on TV from Direct TV, that feature Actor Rob Lowe? You know the one where he plays two different characters in the same ad? He stars as himself the real Rob Lowe along side of a slightly demented version of himself. The characters he has played are rather creepy looking and acting. And of course that is the whole purpose. The Real Rob Lowe in the commercial has Satelight TV and the creepy look-alike has cable TV. While designed to be humorous the ad's purpose is to insinuate that Direct TV is far superior to cable TV. The message it gives, don't be a loser, drop your cable service and switch to Direct TV. If you do so you will be happier, have less problems and be a more attractive and healthy person.

I am sure you are wondering why I am talking about something as trivial as a commercial in my sermon. Or you are wondering if perhaps the I have gone over the deep end. Ultimately I have succeeded, I think, in getting your attention. This is what I am supposed to do as a priest when I am preaching the word of God, get your attention... to make a connection between what may seem at times as abstract spiritual concepts or teachings and every day life. This is exactly what Christ did, he taught using parables and stories and drew on everyday experiences. Today our young people are tuned into technology, and I am sure they are aware

of this commercial, probably not from on TV but most likely from a posting on facebook or the You Tube Clip of the commercial.

When I was preparing for today's sermon, and I was contemplating the Gospel reading which tells the story of the healing of the demon possessed man, I was struck by the contrast of what this man was like at the beginning of the reading, and how he had changed by the end of the reading. Indeed at the beginning, he was the creepy or scary man from the Gadarenes. He was grotesque looking, he was a wild man, he ran around naked terrorizing the village. They tried to contain him with chains, but he broke them. As Christ meets him and prepares to heal him, we learn he is infested or possessed by a legion or whole army of demons. He is filled with the spirit of darkness and evil – he was an icon or image of Satan. When the deamons were caste out of him, he changed, he became the good man from the Gadarenes. So you see the contrast is much like that which is painted in the Direct TV Ad.

There is an interesting correlation between the commercial and this gospel reading. Maybe I am stretching it a bit far, but here goes. The commercial, implies that the creepy Rob Lowe, was imprisoned by cable TV. He was held back, he was doomed to unhappiness and was cut off from modern technology. He was limited, and was bound by cable to the earth. The successful or happy Rob Lowe, had satelight TV, he was not bound to the limitations of cable, the sky was the limited. He looked upward towards the heavens. The point I am making here is that Satan is of the earth and the lower regions, while he promises us great things, he holds out many temptations, and alurments of this world, fame, fortune, and sensual pleasures, when we take a hold of them, when we lust after these things, we become bound to him and

become prisoners of this passing earthly life. On the other hand, when we set our hope on heavenly things, when we seek after Truth, beauty and joy, in following our Lord, we are free. The Gadarene demoniac was a prisoner of the devil until the Lord, released him from the strangehold of sin and evil.

It is not secret that we live in difficult times. It is no secret that our young people face many roadblocks which try to detour them away from the pathway that leads into the eternal kingdom of heaven. This is why now more than ever, we need to stay close to the Church, and be obedient to her teachings, to seek first the kingdom of heaven. We need to do this to maintain our personal freedom. You know the biggest lie that Satan whispers into our ears is that being faithful to God and the Church, limits our freedom. Satan tries to convince us that the Church is here to restrict us, to punish us, to make us feel guilty, to stress us out. He tells us, its okay, you don't need to go to Church every Sunday. God Understands. He tells us don't make the effort to pray, or fast or read scripture, because it is too much work, that instead we need to relax, do something fun... this is the lie. The truth is, yes Church is work, it is work to get up on a Sunday, yes it does require sacrifices and turning down other opportunities. BUT and here is the real deal, when we do so, it helps us to feel better... it makes us stronger, it fills us with the Grace and love of God and gives us the strength to make it through another week.

Yes today's gospel reading like the direct TV commercial provides a contrast between what life is like when we are tethered to the prince of this world – and what it is like when our eyes are

lifted up towards the heavens, when we have a relationship with a living, dynamic God, who came into the world so that we might have a more abundant life.

The choice is ours.... As St. Paul writes and as we have observed in the person of the demoniac, that the wages of sin is death, but the fruit of the life in the spirit, the life in Christ is joy, peace, and love.

Don't be that person, who is made grotesque and ugly, by become enslaved to sin, but let be that beautiful person, who is free, light and filled with Grace who chooses to focus his or her attention on the Kingdom of heaven above all else.

Don't worry if you are struggling and you are feeling weak, and are struggling with temptations of the evil one. The Church is here to rescue you, much like Direct TV says it is there to make you a happier person, if you unshackle yourself from cable TV. Unlike a technology company, the Church will never take advantage of you, it will not employ the bait and switch tactics that ultimately cost you more in the long run, when you take that too good to be true deal. We have the holy Mysteries of Confession and Holy Communion to bring us healing, to cast out the demons that disturb our peace and to inoculate us from being re-infected by sin.

This is the beauty of the Church, This is the power it has to transform us, to free us from the snares of the Evil one, to help us to soar above the cares of this world, and enter into the joy of our Lord for all eternity. Christ is in our Midst! He is and ever shall be!