

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jan 10th 2017

and on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?"

I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

Jesus rebuked him and said, "Quiet! Come out of him!" The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him. All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.

I want to focus on our Gospel reading for today, Mark 1:21-28. My reflection centers on Jesus driving out the unclean spirit from the man in the synagogue. Do you think it's any wonder that Jesus' fame spread throughout the whole region of Galilee after his driving out the unclean spirit from a man who was inflicted? What a privilege to have been someone in the synagogue to witness this miracle from the Holy One of God.

The year of 2016 brought many opportunities for me as a Christian. All of these opportunities provided me with being able to learn and trust the power of our Holy God. To realize his power above all things, even the unclean spirits that seem to sneak into my brain once in a while. You know, those voices that tell me that I can do this all on my own, but my heart was telling me no you can't. It's that journey of the Jesuit tenet of the unity of mind, heart and soul, the self-awareness of allowing God to enter in order to become a better and whole person.

January 2016 brought me to my knees with the decision to not do things the same way I had always done before. Not to ignore the cries and pleas of those who needed to know God's love in a very deep and caring way. January 1, 2016 was the day I looked into my heart and decided that it would be dedicated to our God, I would no longer remain quiet and let things move in the direction they had been moving. It was the day when my husband and I realized we could no longer allow someone we love deeply to continue to be troubled with the unclean spirits that conflicted his mind due to nothing he had control over, but due to an illness that truly decays a human brain. 2016 was the year that we fell to our knees and put our son into God's hands as well as our own lives and asked God to fill our hearts with those of a servant, to be the light that our son could no longer see. To say this was an easy release of control is an understatement. It required prayer every single day, letting go and letting God be the pilot. I recall a day when my husband called me at work to share his concern that our son refused to take his medication. This is a big deal for those who suffer from the symptoms of severe mental illness. I paused at my desk and took it to God in prayer. My husband texted me within 2 minutes of my prayer to excitedly tell me that our son took his medication. This was step one of many more steps too countless to recall throughout the year.

I would like to share a story about how our God of Love does want to drive out the unclean spirits and make way for Him to be enthroned in our hearts. About 2 weeks ago, my son's new fixation was on candles. These are no ordinary candles, however. These are candles that he carefully sprinkled each

with a special water. He then asked if he could share candles with everyone he knew. So, after mailing several boxes of candles to friends and family across the United States, I came home from work one evening to a very special candle that had been placed inside of a jar which was surrounded by a metal cross. The candle was lit and next to the candle with the flame were several more candles waiting to replace the old candle. My son told me that he hears me talk about God as the light of the world, and surely the candle is a good representation of that light. He provided me with several candles in order that this light might never go dark but burn constantly as a reminder that Christ is with us. This is the first gift I have received from my son in 10 years. I stood there speechless with tears welling up in my eyes, grabbed my son, hugged him and told him how much I love him. While I am writing this reflection, my tears continue.

For those who believe in God's promises, we wait patiently for his time to make straight our paths. The year of 2016 for me will be fondly remembered as one of pure light, the light that shines so bright you cannot extinguish it. The light that fills my heart, mind and soul to allow me to work toward reaching my full potential and live as my best self. How one leads themselves affects those who are around them. I never knew that my son was watching and listening to my prayer-filled moments. My heart is filled with gratitude that God has shown me his presence through my son.

So as we move forward into this new year, my prayer for all of us is that we will continue to be protected from the unclean spirits. They lurk around us every day, and they want to wreak havoc that can draw us away from our God. God does have the power to drive them out of our mind, heart and soul, we only need to call on Him.

Blessings as we begin this new year...

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