

# Sunday Homily

## FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

19 JUNE 2022

YEAR C

“Return to your home, and declare how much  
God has done for you.”

Luke 8:39

### Illustration

Joanna was a devout Christian who, out of the blue, experienced a real sense of the presence of God; she overflowed with gratitude and it changed her life. She did not tell many people, guessing that most of her friends would not understand what she was talking about. But after some inner prompting she was drawn to talk to a priest who, after hearing her story, agreed to become her spiritual counsellor. For a time she was on a spiritual “high” and could talk of little else than her new awakening.

Then one day her spiritual guide said: “Jo, isn’t it time you came down from the mountain?” When she queried this, he reminded her about Moses who, having seen the face of God, returned to the desert plain to continue leading the people of Israel.

When Jesus had exposed his disciples to his transfiguration on the mountain, they all returned to continue their journey towards Jerusalem. And even now, in our own day, the lovers of Christ who gather at Taizé or other places of Christian community and experience the openness, vision and spiritual renewal are reminded that they cannot stay there. However, they are encouraged to take Taizé back to their own countries and homes. And so it was with the “Gerasene demoniac”.

### Gospel Teaching

Jesus, even though among foreigners, was confronted by someone whose insight and loosened tongue announced him to be the Son of God. In those days, such a declaration and behaviour would always have been regarded as madness. Today we might diagnose these as symptoms of a psychiatric illness possibly engendered by anxiety, environment, or even the Roman occupation of his country.

Jesus is not concerned with reasons for distress, but only by the distress itself. Jesus never concerns himself with the minutiae of illness or, indeed, sin. Jesus knows our weakness and vulnerability and it is these he addresses and heals. He does not delve for detail. It is the fundamentals of someone’s life and their degree of pain which absorb him.

It is easy to imagine the degree of wonder and gratitude that the man felt at being healed so completely by Jesus. After being deprived of his liberty, shunned by his family and excluded from religious life, his freedom must have made his heart sing. No wonder he wanted to drop everything and follow Jesus! The life which had been returned to him was his gift to his Lord.

But Jesus knew that the good news of salvation, which was intended to release millions of others from their own shackles through the ages, would not be effective if everyone who received his healing during his earthly ministry travelled with him. Seeds have to be planted wherever people are. In sending the healed man away, he was committing him to take up the work in his own place, among his own people. Jesus knew how hard this would be. But the man went and did it because he believed and trusted Jesus.

## Application

Anyone who has ever been healed from a debilitating illness, released from any kind of prison, or relieved of a crushing burden will know how our Gerasene brother must have felt. Joanna certainly would! To become aware of God's action in the world at a very personal level becomes the yeast which enlivens the world around us. It is so tempting to remain upon the mountain, forever to live within the moment, or memory of, the moments of God's presence which so graced us and inspired us. Who wouldn't choose to remain with Jesus, following, listening, sharing? But this is not active Christianity. God gives these moments of intimacy to strengthen us for the task. He places his hand upon us for a moment, to remind us that he is God and we are his people.

But we are his people with a purpose, his purpose. However tempting it is to "remain on the mountain", we have to come down to the desert plain and begin to talk, to work, to share what God's inspiration has given us. We each become a channel of God's grace. His gift provides eloquence and energy to speak the words of justice, of peace, of equality, of righteousness, and the courage to do this where we are, where we live and work. It is where God wants us to be, where we belong, where his will is truly done by those who truly love him.