

The Twenty Third Sunday after Pentecost-The Nativity Fast
Luke 8:26-39

And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. And when He went forth to land, there met Him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech Thee, torment me not. (For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were deep. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that He would suffer them to enter into them. And He suffered them. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and He went up into the ship, and returned back again. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought Him that he might be with Him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him. (KJV)

God's Holy Church has prescribed the beginning of the Nativity Fast at this time. This is a time to orient the heart, the mind and the soul toward preparing well for the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord Jesus Christ

The days leading to the Feast of the Nativity are a time to get the self in order in a way pleasing to the Lord God. This is a time to focus clearly on the depth of the meaning of the Son of God taking on human flesh.

The miracle of Jesus Christ's virgin birth is sufficient to occupy the depth of thought for all of life. The action of the Holy Spirit with the Mother of God, gives the believer plenty to think about in the days leading to the Feast of the Nativity.

The place of angels in Jesus Christ's birth deserves careful consideration in the believer's heart, mind and soul. Keeping the focus on Jesus Christ's birth and away from the crass materialism and corruption in the world is a challenge.

The Gospel for today addresses the presence of a man overtaken by devils. The Lord Jesus Christ brought peace to the man and restored him to his right mind. Jesus Christ's action with the legion of devils made a decided difference.

Each believer faces demons within that are a challenge to living the life fully in Jesus Christ in today's world. The Nativity Fast is a time to address the demons within through increased prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

The Nativity Fast is a time to focus increasingly on the love and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ taking on human flesh is a definitive act of Divine Love.

When the Divine took on human flesh, He humbled Himself. Jesus entered into the world in a common environment. He took on flesh in a specific time in human history. Jesus Christ's birth changed human history forever.

The glittering lights and commercialism in the world today do not speak to the depth of the meaning of Jesus Christ taking on human flesh. Believers need to fast, pray and turn to God's Holy Church to learn more about Christ's birth.

The days of the Nativity Fast are opportunities to invest in the Kingdom of God. The degree the believer honors the Nativity Fast will equate to the degree of joy experienced on the Feast of the Nativity.

The Church in wisdom prescribes the Nativity Fast each year. Participating in the Fast is expected. Participating in the Fast is purely voluntary. The Fast involves more than discipline in use of food and drink.

The Fast involves focusing the heart, mind and soul on the meaning of Jesus Christ's birth. Believers are to use the days leading to the Feast to prepare in welcoming the Newborn Christ Child into the world.

Christ's birth will be celebrated in the present on the Feast of the Nativity. Each person will determine his or her readiness to welcome the New Born Christ Child into the heart, mind, soul and home.

God's Holy Church begins the journey to the Feast of the Nativity today. Each day of the Nativity Fast has value. Each moment is a time to invest in the Kingdom of God.

The man in the present Gospel was blessed by Jesus Christ to be restored to his right mind. Peace of mind is best experienced in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Demons afflicting believers are no challenge for Jesus Christ. The Nativity Fast is the Church's way of keeping believers focused on Christ. The Nativity Fast enables believers to refocus on Jesus Christ first embraced at Holy Baptism.

Thank God for the arrival of the Nativity Fast. Thank God for the Church's wisdom in placing the Fast in our lives at this particular point in time. The world needs the peaceful presence of Christ initiated by His taking on human flesh.

Let us use the days of the Nativity Fast to experience greater peace and rightness of mind. Let us focus clearly on Jesus Christ taking on human flesh. May the Feast of Christ's birth be approached with great anticipation and wisdom.

The Twenty Third Sunday after Pentecost. Holy Martyrs and Confessors Gurias, Samonas and Abibas. November 15/28, 2021. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

Father Rodney Torbic