

Reflection Monday Week 4 – 2021

Reflecting yesterday on Racial Justice and Jesus healing, today Jesus heals a man possessed by many, many devils – Legion. Let us thank God that, in Baptism, we have put on Christ who is our protection against such evil. Our founder Emmanuel d'Alzon writes about Baptism as a spiritual garment:

For the baptised Christian Jesus Christ is a kind of garment. Saint Paul tells his Galatian converts: *"All you who have been baptised in Christ's name have put on the person of Christ."* So, Jesus is our spiritual garment. When I was baptised, I became clothed in his grace. And what can this mean except that my whole being – whatever I think, feel, say or do – must bear witness to him by whose blood we have been cleansed, renewed and regenerated. This is no trivial observation – it must be taken very seriously because the Apostle Paul keeps on repeating it: *"Circumcision means nothing, and the want of it means nothing – when a man is in Christ Jesus there has been a new creation"* (Gal. 6:15). *"You must be clothed in the new self which is created in God's image"*. And what is this "new self" which was Adam? I am, indeed, a son of Adam, I bear his mark, which is that of Original Sin. *"You have stripped off the old self with its practices."* But my new self has superseded the old. What were the operative words when I took the religious habit? *"May the Lord divest you of the old man and his acts"* – that is to say his influence, the things he persuades you to do. This, then, is my task: to divest myself of Adam, of his sinful state and inclinations, and of the punishment they entail – and re-clothe myself (as I did when I was baptised, but more so now) in the "newness" of Jesus Christ – in his grace, in his gifts. But this requires my co-operation. I am offered the new garment – I must put it on, and prove myself worthy to wear it.

With the psalmist let us say: *"How great is the goodness, Lord, that you show to those who trust you."*

A pastor was giving a lesson to a group of children on the 23rd Psalm. He noticed that one of the little boys seemed disquieted by the phrase *"Surely, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life..."*

"What's wrong with that, Johnny?" the pastor asked.

"Well," answered Johnny, *"I understand about having goodness and mercy, for God is good. But I'm not sure I'd like Shirley following me around all the time."*