

## WE BELONG TO JESUS!

Let me ask you a question. When you think about the future, what makes you most anxious or fearful?

I suppose there are any number of things that cause us to be anxious or fearful. Among them are things we don't have any control over, such as acts of terrorism, or the ecological disaster that is unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico.

These kind of acts tell us that something has gone terribly wrong in our world. This is not the kind of world we want - and certainly not the world God desires.

The Gospel reading for today is a story about something that has gone terribly wrong in our world. It is about a man who had demons living in him. The demons had taken over his life. He was no longer in his right mind. He was no longer in control of his life. And that's scary.

We want a world where scary things like that don't happen. And if they do happen, we want a world where they can be fixed and made right. And so we look to science and education and medicine and money to fix our world. But that doesn't always work. Very smart scientists and engineers haven't been able to stop a pipe from spewing thousands of barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. Medical experts have not been able to cure all our diseases or solve all emotional disorders.

This is not a perfect world. And whether we blame demons or sin or whatever, living in this world can be fearful.

That's why the Bible readings for today are such good news. Jesus cast out the demons! Just think what this means. Jesus is more powerful than demons. Sin and evil cannot overpower him. We certainly see this when Jesus was nailed to the cross. The full fury of sin and evil was thrust at him. It appeared they had defeated Jesus. But on Easter morning, Jesus rose from the dead. The worst had happened and Jesus prevailed!

This should give us hope and confidence. Terrible things do happen in our world. And sometimes evil seems to prevail. But Scripture proclaims that Jesus will ultimately prevail.

And the good news is that we belong to Jesus!

That's the message of the reading we heard today from the book of Galatians. We heard, "For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith." Think about that. You are a child of God because of Jesus! And we also heard, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ, have clothed yourselves with Christ." Through baptism, we belong to Jesus Christ who makes us children of God! And what a huge difference that makes!

We live in a fearful world where terrible things can and do happen. But through baptism we belong to Jesus - the One who casts out demons and conquers sin and evil! We belong to the One who has the greatest power in this universe.

And so in the Baptismal liturgy when asked, "Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God?" we boldly say, "I renounce them." And when asked, "Do you renounce the powers of

this world that rebel against God?" we boldly say, "I renounce them." And when asked "Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?" we boldly say, "I renounce them."

We renounce the ways of sin and evil because we know there is something better. We know that Jesus Christ has come to rid this world of sin and evil. We know that Jesus Christ has come to make this world a better world. We know that Jesus Christ has come to turn this world into the kind of world which God desires. And we belong to Jesus!

In baptism we are clothed with Christ. We don't face this raw world alone without protection. We are clothed with Christ. We are not thrust out into the world naked, exposed to the forces of evil. We are clothed with Christ. We are not stripped bare of all hope and promise. We are clothed with Christ.

It doesn't matter who we are - black or white, rich or poor, male or female - baptism is what counts. It doesn't matter how much money we have or how much education we have or what status we may have in the community - baptism is what counts. Baptism is what counts because baptism connects us to Jesus - the One who casts out demons and conquers sin and evil. Baptism connects us to Jesus and that gives us hope and confidence as we face a fearful world.

What better way is there to face the future than to be clothed in Christ? What better way is there to live in today's world than to belong to Christ who makes us his own through the waters of Baptism? We belong to Jesus! We are clothed in Christ! What could be better than that?