

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are-- the Holy One of God!" "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching-- and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him." (Mar 1:21-27 NIV)

Jesus comes today with healing, knocking at my door, appealing, Off'ring pardon, grace and peace. He Himself makes preparation, And I hear His invitation: "Come and taste the blessed feast!"¹

Dear friends of our Lord and saviour IX: Healing is of grave concern. Especially for those, who are ill, hurting, suffering. Being blind is bad. Not being able to hear is worse, some say. I'm sure that somebody who is deaf and dumb has a tough lot. Especially if there are no provisions made for special needs. When the Old Testament prophet Isaiah promises the coming Christ and saving suffering servant of the Lord, he describes him as one, who will not break a bruised reed nor snuff out a smouldering wick. (cf. Isa 42:3 NIV) When our Lord IX – the Holy One of God - went about his divine ministry there in Galilee/Judea, he sought the lost and took care of the forsaken, his was a healing ministry par excellence – not condemning and destroying the sinners, but saving them, forgiving them, healing them + restoring them to life with God and his holy family. We heard that yesterday in the Sunday's sermon and we will hear more about of that in this weeks meditations and sermons on the theme: "The Lord heals the ill and suffering". IX our true Physician².

Our Lord IX came to heal us in body and soul. Psalm 103 reminds us at every confessional service, that we should not forget all these his good and gracious benefits, which he has showered over us:

"Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits-- who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed." (Psa 103:1-6 NIV)

With him this is not just wishful thinking, but truthful reality for when he speaks it happens and what he says occurs. That's his divine authority and creative ruling and judgment: "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" That's what happens. IX is true and rightful king. He rules with all authority over heaven & earth, visible and invisible, good and evil. IX triumphs and the devils tremble, fear and fail. IX destroys the devil and breaks his destructive power over us, for he has

¹ LSB 620:1

² "I the Lord am thy physician." Exo 15:26 LEE

Wilhelm Weber, P.

come to conquer all evil forces so that he would restore us and give us room to breath, to come alive and be free and joyful under God's good reign and ruling. Obviously the evil one and plenty oppose this godly judgement and divine doing. Off course Satan tries to object, revolt and run a counter-attack, terrorize & upset. Yet he is doomed and with him all his devilish ilk and ungodly being. The devil can't do anything of lasting consequence against victorious and almighty Jesus, because he has overcome all sin, evil, death and devil with his glorious goodness, grace and mercy. That happened and is still happening step by step, one devil and one evil at the time until IX triumphed most gloriously on Good Friday and since then all the Church celebrates this Easter victory, Sunday for Sunday, day in day out when we rise out of bed in the most powerful name of Jesus: Rise from the dead + and when we go to bed again in the most merciful and loving care of our benevolent Father in heaven: Into your hands I commit my body and soul and all things + Yes, the foul and malevolent parody of a father, this despicable originator of all lies may still rant and rave, shaking this and that miserable victim a last time and shrieking terribly in all his rebellious upheaval but condemned frustration. Yet, he is lost, he's doomed, he's bound, captive and condemned forever and ever. It's what IX came into this world for: To destroy the sinister works of the evil one (1Jo 3:8 NIV) and to bring us all back into God's kingdom of grace, mercy, love & peace turning us lost and poor miserable sinners into true heirs of heaven, very children of God and reconciled brothers and restored sisters of our Lord and saviour IX – living in godly righteousness and holy purity all the days of our life. Thus by God's doing in IX the devil is but a failed existence – nothing more than a stinking fart from the empty and harrowed bowls of hell.

Still you should remember exorcism – casting out demons & fighting the devil - is serious business, not child's play. It's pastor's business – an not only in Madagascar, just ask P.Nkambule or anybody living in our townships. We too are called to put on God's armour and fight the good fight.

Remember how

"some Jews went around driving out evil spirits, who tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed? They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding." (Act 19:13-16 NIV)

That's why we should be watchful and pray, fast and be disciplined, being manly and strong in the Lord as he would have us and as his apostle St. Peter admonishes:

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.” (1Pe 5:8-11 NIV)

Yes and that mighty apostle and exemplary missionary of God St. Paul follows the same line in his writing to the Ephesians:

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.” (Eph 6:10-20 NIV)

Yes, pray for professors, teachers bishops, pastors and other faithful servants in the church.

Thankfully our Lord IX has not left us as orphans – or as people, who are helpless and powerless. Rather he himself is with us with his grace and mercy, with his goodness and caring protection, watchful rule and powerful authority. He tells our fear to subside like he commanded those stormy waves to calm down: “Be quiet!” He judges our sins forgiven and pardoned, when he pronounces authoritatively: “Your sins are forgiven!” He opens our ears that we hear his gracious favour and loving kindness: “Ephata!” He opens our eyes that we see his very body given for us into death and perceive/taste his very blood shed for us for the forgiveness of all our sins. This godly and victorious exorcism was performed on each one of us at our Baptism. Remember? Well, perhaps not, but most important and crucially is that it happened. The pastor as a called and ordained minister of IX – in his stead and by his command – proclaimed in God’s authority and in the triune God’s name also for you at that font way back then: *“Depart you evil spirit and make room for the Holy Spirit. + Receive the sign of the holy cross both on your forehead and on your chest + In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”* Normally the old Adam gives a shriek of revulsion and defiance at these infant baptisms too. It makes old pastor’s smile and the entire congregation nods

knowingly: The devil doesn't go without a fight – the fight lasts till our dying breath it does – but thank God, he's done, he's history, he's no longer in control of us. We belong to IX. He's our only Lord and godly master, our gracious saviour and healing physician. He takes good care of us – always – in good and in bad days. Therefore we don't need to be afraid. We're covered. Covered with the blood of the lamb and shielded against the mighty devouring sword of God's judgement and wrathful angel + Amen.

*Now have I found consolation, Comfort in my tribulation, balm to heal the troubled soul.
God, my shield from every terror, cleanses me from sin and error, makes my wounded spirit whole.*

Hymn 594: *God's own child, I gladly say it...*