



My Beloved Ones,

Today I wish to discuss the connection between the mind, the heart, and our hands. The Church Fathers take the *nous* to mean “the eye of the heart”. When a thought—pure or not, enters our minds, we have a choice to accept or reject this thought. In the case of improper thoughts, these might be difficult to dismiss, because they are often related to those passions with which we are afflicted (examples might include love of food or drink, lust or gossip, among many other sins). Having entered our mind, the thought can take root. Without prayer, self-examination, Confession, as well as the Eucharist, the Fathers speak of the thought passing from the mind onto our heart. Once we allow our worldly desires to implant itself in our hearts, these passions will seek their outlet from ourselves, to the outside world.

Christ, as our loving and merciful Incarnate Lord and Savior, understands our weaknesses. We see a direct demonstration of this in this Sunday’s Gospel. Jesus is passing through the region of Gadarenes, when He encounters a man possessed by many demons. Luke tells us that this man approaches Jesus from the tombs, but we know from Christ’s encounters with other demoniacs that such persons were often expelled from their communities, and even chained. This was done for the safety of the community, but looking deeper, we see a lack of compassion from others. This demoniac may be under the sway of the Evil One’s influence, but who among men is not tempted, spiritually untouched by weaknesses, as we have shown?

Unlike the self-preservation shown by the neighbors, Christ shows no fear of the demoniac. Christ approaches him, expelling the demons into the herd of swine. The rest of the Gospel is well known: the swine perish falling from the cliffs, and the newly healed man receives clothes. However, instead of reacting with wonder or amazement at our Lord’s generosity and fearlessness, the townspeople beg Christ to depart. Surely this miracle was frightening, but we should ask: are we like the townspeople, who cast off their troubled fellow men, and fearfully beg the Word of God to depart; or will we instead recognize the miraculous opportunity be made spiritually whole?

Has our love of material things and the pleasures of this life so overwhelmed our hearts that we are unable to recognize Christ when He comes; are we unable to have the noetic experience for which we human beings were created? Only through fasting, prayer, and sincere repentance can we become less like the crowd of townspeople, and more like the unheard, but grateful man.

**+ALEXIOS**

Metropolitan of Atlanta