

# **Day 1 of Novena**

## **The Cure of the Demoniatic**

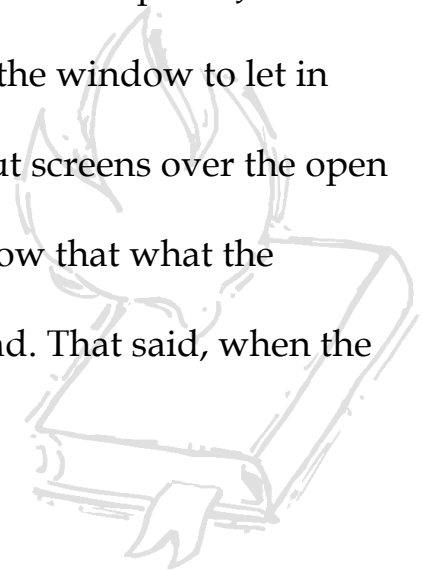
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
July 17, 2026

1 Sm 3: 3-10, 19  
Ps 40: 2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10  
Jn 1: 35-42

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The miracle with which I start this novena is not found in the Gospel of John. Instead, I am focus on the healing of the demoniac story in Mark 1: 21-18 (a major theme in Mk's gospel; see also Mk 5: 1-20 & Mk 9: 17-25; Mt 8: 28-34 and Lk 8: 26-39) for a specific reason, because, in the Gospel of Mark, there is a theme that very much defines this Novena. In fact, this reading illustrates the malaise of the Catholic Church, especially in the last 50 years, following Vatican II.

Prior to Vatican II, the churches throughout the world were growing; the churches were prospering. As the world united after World War II, all kinds of good things in the faith took place. When Pope St. John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council to "open the window to let in some fresh air" (unfortunately, Italy does not put screens over the open windows to keep out the bugs), we certainly know that what the bishops did from the Second Vatican was not bad. That said, when the



text was taken out of their hands to be interpreted by others, the faith life of the Church increasingly began to lesson. As a result, sins of the flesh made an assault on the faith, less Catholics attended Mass and enrolled in Catholic schools and the world as a whole began conforming to the hedonistic desires of our society rather than the will of God (in short, hedonism became the largest growing religion throughout the world).

We also learn that life is cyclic – when evil forces exiled the Chosen People from their Promised Land, few returned but then the Church started to grow. Prophets and saints alike from Jeremiah to St. Pope Pius X warned us about the ways of the world and were summarily ignored and the Church declined as a result. What we experience in today’s age is the result of good people being lured away from the faith by the demons of today’s age, and of every age to be honest.

This returns us to a theme in the Gospel of Mark that is key to our faith – that this “Messianic Secret” about which the demons were so aware in the First Century is the secret accessible to all of us but so infrequently recognized by all of us as a whole. As I learned in the

seminary, this “secret” becomes invisible to those on the inside but those from the outside (especially the demoniacs) certainly understand yet keep shielding from the world in favor of the hedonistic desires of our society.

The demons clearly understand that which so many of us forget to embrace, that Jesus was (and is) the Christ, the Messiah, the new King David whom Moses prophesies in the book of Deuteronomy. In the book of Deuteronomy, we learn that of those 600,000 men who left Egypt (that land of slavery) even Mose had fallen from a lack of faith (only two men kept the faith in those forty years in the desert – Caleb and Joshua). Moses shows us how he doubted God, which is why he was not allowed to enter into the Promised Land.

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses warns the Chosen People that they will prosper for a while after their return, but because of their disobedience of God, eventually they would fall. An Old Testament scholar named Lawrence Boadt summarized this theme well in his Introduction to the Old Testament: *Infidelity to the covenant, is given through Moses, would lead to disaster and destruction.* This is exactly what

happened to the Chosen People. As we read in the Old Testament, the Chosen People were *not* faithful to God, and, eventually, they were expelled out of the Promised Land and exiled to Babylon (modern day Baghdad, Iraq) for over fifty years.

In today's age, we kind of have repeated this unfortunate story from our history – society as a whole has turned away from God and replaced our Lord and God with human idols and desires. After Vatican II, many people chose to become more secularized. The largest demographic growing in the United States are the unchurched, the people who do not believe in God. We call them the “nones,” N O N E S, who believe in nothing.

As this kind of religion has taken hold based on humanity's hedonistic desires, our society as a whole has lost her moral base, and, in a way, has lost her sense of hope. As we have learned from history, when we lose our purpose, then we lose all belief that there is good yet to come.

This curing of the demoniac in Mk 1 and subsequent chapters tell us that the ones who knew that Jesus was the Christ were the demons that

possessed good people, because they knew who God was, and they have dedicated their existence to possess us and turn us away from God and towards the way of sin, that slow, gradual slope, that C.S. Lewis once illustrated in his book, The Screwtape Letters. He writes,

“Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one--the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.”

This nice, easy ride down to the kingdom of hell takes place by *not* following God, by *not* believing in miracles, by *not* embracing the warning of Moses, and then by *not* following this wonderful example of the God-man who can heal, who can love, who can get us to heaven if we hold on to him. Instead, Moses and the prophets, Jesus and the saints knew that the demons and evil people prefer the ways of the world over the ways of love. C.S. Lewis knew all too well that society as a whole prefers to have things the way we want it instead of saying, “Thy will be done,” that we will follow what God tells us to do.

In our faith lives, the greatest challenge we face in life is to follow God's will, not our own, if we wish to enter the kingdom of heaven.

When our will takes over, look what happens around us... all these wars, all these diseases, all these horrible things that happen infect us and then we lose a sense of hope as a result from this loss. If we allow God to rid the demons from our lives, no matter what happens to us, no matter what evils of the world, no matter how much Satan tries to enter our hearts, our faith in God allows God to carry us to the other side.

We learn from the demoniac stories in Mark that even if Jesus rids of these demons on earth, even if we are not healed on earth through our Lord's miraculous interventions, at least God provides us with the spiritual miracles of life to protect us from *the second death*, the death of the soul.

Sometimes in life, good people say to me, "Father, because I have not received answers to my prayers, or my sicknesses, or illnesses. I lost my faith in God." In response, I have come to learn that no matter how many people are cured of the demoniacs, no matter how many people are cured by Jesus from the scriptures, every single one of them eventually died. God's purpose becoming incarnate was not to save the human life; God entered the world to show us that if we have faith, the

miracle that awaits us is eternal life and heaven. The question is, do we embrace the miracles of heaven or allow the demons on earth to poison us? Do we embrace the Christ, or do we wish to ignore that Messianic Secret, so we don't see God at all?

The answer to those questions is the reason we celebrate this first Online Mass for the St. Anne Novena today, and that's why the number of people, the few number of people who remain here at the St. Anne Novena who *get* what we are doing, who open their hearts to God, realize the *true* miracle that takes place. For that reason, I continue to offer these masses. I offer these Masses for you, to tell you that I have not forgotten about you, that God is trying to work through me, to take care of you, no matter who you are, in these Border Town parishes, in these periphery churches, in these small little communities, that no one pays attention, except God, and the people who live here, and the people who understand.

*That* is why I really believe in my heart that I was called to be here with you, because I want to make sure you know that someone cares to you... namely, God, through me. The miracle is happening right now,

and many people do not see the miracle nor the Messiah, because the demons of the world have clouded their vision of faith.

God bless you for staying with us. God bless you for joining us in this Novena. God bless you for being *you*, embracing your life, so we can allow God to pass through you and pass through me so we can offer this miracle of faith to the people that we need. This is our prayer.