



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**26th Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 29th 2024**

Theme: "He that is not against us is for us. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off."

Gathering Prayer

All: O God, who manifest your almighty power above all by pardoning and showing mercy, bestow, we pray, your grace abundantly upon us and make those hastening to attain your promises heirs to the treasures of heaven. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

³⁸ John said to him, "Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he was not following us." ³⁹ But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me.

⁴⁰ For he that is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward.

⁴² "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea.

⁴³ And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. ...

⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. ... ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

Gospel Focus

This gospel contains some hard words, it seems to suggest that the life of a Christian is a black and white, all-or nothing propositions. We know, of course, that Jesus does not really want us to remove parts of our body that cause sin. Rather, our goal is to become whole in our pursuit of holiness. We are called to tend to the hand, the eye, or the thoughts that cause us to sin, but we are called to transform and convert them. Every part of us can be put into service of bringing us closer to Christ. Every thought, every word, every deed is an opportunity to grow in our life as a Christian. Christ wants integrity from us-integrated lives of wholeness where every part contributes to the whole project of following Christ more closely.

Gospel Reflection

In both the first reading and in the gospel, individuals who are not authorized by Moses and by Jesus, respectively, exercise a ministry akin to that of these leaders. Eldad and Medad had not gone out to the tent meeting along with the other seventy, upon whom God bestowed a share of the Spirit that was upon Moses. Nonetheless, the Spirit came to rest upon them too, they began to speak prophetically in the camp.

Distressed by this, Joshua insisted they be stopped. Was he resentful because he was trained at Moses' side from his youth and followed carefully all the directives, whereas these two appeared suddenly and began to minister with the others? Moses assures Joshua that the prophesying of Eldad and Medad in no way diminishes Moses' own authority as prophet.

In fact, it was Moses' own complaint to God about his too heavy burden of leadership that prompted God to bestow the Spirit on others who could lighten the load. Moses exclaims his wish that all the people would prophesy in God's Spirit. He recognizes that while not all are authorized to prophesy officially, all do have a measure of prophetic gift to be shared.

A similar scene is played out in the gospel, where Jesus' disciples are upset about an exorcist who is claiming Jesus' authority as he casts out demons. Jesus insists that the disciples stop trying to prevent the exorcist from exercising his ministry, even though he is not an official follower of Jesus.

It is curious that in both instances, those who want to be officially recognized ministers are sadly focused on a perceived threat to their own authority, rather than on the recipients of the ministry. Joshua might have asked, What is the effect of the prophetic word spoken by the two who were not authorized? Is it unleashing God's freeing love in the hearers? Likewise, the disciples might have asked, Was the other exorcist freeing people from tormenting forces that blocked their ability to love and be loved? A word of approval from the wise leaders, Moses and Jesus, serves to reorient their followers toward the important matter of ensuring that the pressing needs of their people be addressed by whomever the Spirit empowered to do so.

One way for leaders and ministers to learn to see from this kind of perspective is to reflect on the ministry they receive from others. Jesus holds up to his disciples the example of one who offers them a cup of water to drink. With this simple act, the giver recognizes in the thirsty one a shared humanity and a common thirst, as a member of Christ's body. Jesus also directs his disciples to reflect on the ministry they receive from others. When they know themselves as needy, they can learn, by accepting the gift of a cup of water, to shift their attention away from the prerogatives of credentialed ministry toward the neediness of those to whom the service is rendered.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Numbers 11:25-29

²⁵ Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was upon him and put it upon the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did so no more.

²⁶ Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested upon them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷ And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." ²⁸ And Joshua the son of Nun, the minister of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, "My lord Moses, forbid them."

²⁹ But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!"

Responsorial Reading — Ps 19:8, 10, 12-13, 14

R: The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.

The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul;
the decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple **(R)**

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever;
the ordinances of the Lord are true, all of them just. **(R)**

Though your servant is careful of them, very diligent in keeping them, yet who can detect failings? Cleanse me from my unknown faults! **(R)**

From wanton sin especially, restrain your servant; let it not rule over me.
Then shall I be blameless and innocent of serious sin. **(R)**

Second Reading — James 5:1-6

¹ Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ² Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. ⁴ Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. ⁵ You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

1034. - Jesus often speaks of "Gehenna" of "the unquenchable fire" reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost. (Cf. Mt 5:22,29; 10:28; 13:42,50; Mk 9:43-48.) Jesus solemnly proclaims that he "will send his angels, and they will gather . . . all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire," (Mt 13:41-42) and that he will pronounce the condemnation: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!" (Mt 25:41)

Sharing and Discussion

1. Jesus says, "For he that is not against us is for us." How does this challenge our understanding of unity within the Catholic community? How can we apply this principle in our relationships with other Christian denominations or religious groups?
2. How can we be more mindful of our responsibility to guide others, particularly those who are young or new in their faith? What practical steps can we take to ensure we are a positive influence rather than a stumbling block?
3. Have you ever been in a situation where you realized that your behavior could negatively influence someone else's faith journey? How did you handle it, and what did you learn from the experience?

Closing Prayer

All: Good and gracious God, through the example of your son Jesus, disciples of every age learned how to live with integrity and hope. Hear our prayers that we might grow closer to you and to our neighbors. We asked this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Living The Gospel bible study/sharing via Zoom
Every Wednesday
Time: 8 – 9.30 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2760073734?pwd=cDRZR2JQMGRobVkwdTY3ZVF5L1BwZz09>

Meeting ID: 276 007 3734
Passcode: 1WordOfGod

All are welcome!

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References:

- (1) Gospel Notes are taken from The Navarre Bible
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