

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time



If your ego is at the root of all your troubles, destroy it. It is better to be a humble servant of the Lord than master of your own hell.

In this Sunday's Gospel Reading, we hear Jesus share about the great lengths we are to go in order to remove sin, or unhealthy attachments that keep us distant from God, from our lives. In recovery, we know the value of going to any length to find freedom from lust addiction and sexual compulsions and instead seek new life in Christ. Often, that means overcoming interpersonal barriers like envy, greed, resentment, and fear.

Even the disciples had their share of complaints, bickering, and petty rivalries. Last Sunday we heard a few disciples arguing over who among them was the greatest shortly after Jesus told them of his destiny. This Sunday, we hear a remark about someone driving out demons who is not part of the "inner circle."

*John said to Jesus,
"Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name,
and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us."
Jesus replied, "Do not prevent him.
There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name
who can at the same time speak ill of me.
For whoever is not against us is for us.
Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink
because you belong to Christ,
amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward.*

John seems to have been disturbed that someone outside of the group might get some undeserved credit, ignoring the fact that demons were being driven out and that good was being done. Of course, the pettiness of John's comment can be found in some of our own attitudes, both as individuals, families, and communities. In doing so, we lose sight of our mission and find ourselves jealous, nit-picking, and holding tight to our social privileges rather than making our way to the peripheries to meet others in their suffering.

A similar story is found in this Sunday's First Reading. God bestows His spirit upon a group of 70 elders traveling with Moses. Two members were absent from the gathering when this took place but were similarly seized by the spirit of the Lord which stirred some jealousy among those in the camp.

*Now two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad,
were not in the gathering but had been left in the camp.
They too had been on the list, but had not gone out to the tent;
yet the spirit came to rest on them also,
and they prophesied in the camp.
So, when a young man quickly told Moses,
"Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp,"
Joshua, son of Nun, who from his youth had been Moses' aide, said,
"Moses, my lord, stop them."
But Moses answered him,
"Are you jealous for my sake?
Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets!
Would that the Lord might bestow his spirit on them all!"*

Recognizing how others use their spiritual gifts to advance the kingdom of God, regardless of their affiliation, can positively impact our lives and the support surrounding us. We can do the same by offering our gifts to the world while staying in tune with the word of God and being guided by the Twelve Steps.

When we are united in recovery, we know that our reliance upon God and each other is what really matters. Sharing the good news with others and being an instrument of God's peace takes priority over trivial matters that do nothing but weigh us down. May the Lord bestow His spirit upon us all!

Reflection Questions

- How do you overcome self-pity, judgment, and petty rivalries that might threaten your serenity?
- How has recovery opened your heart to others?
- In this Sunday's Gospel Reading we hear Jesus say: "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into [hell]." How do you relate this to your pursuit of recovery?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Numbers 11:25-29

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 19:8, 10, 12-13, 14

Second Reading: James 5:1-6

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