

26th Week of Ord. Time – Cycle B

(Nm 11:25-29, Jas 5:1-6, Mk 9:38-43,45,47-48)

This may be a football weekend, but today our scriptures give us a triple-play; Readings that provide us with a threefold eye opener to help us grow in spiritual maturity.

In the Book of Numbers, the fourth book of the Torah, we hear of someone trying to encourage Moses to stop a person who was not a member of their group from doing the work of God – prophesying and spreading the word of God. That still exist today when we think we have all the answers and then realize that there are others too, called by different names, groups that promote the sacredness of life, people who promote strong family values and stand up for moral courage. They may not even carry the name of “Christian”. The recent visit by the Dali Lama comes to mind. Surely no one would argue that he stands for many of the same values that we Christians profess. These people or groups are not enemies of the church; they are allies, who promote the work of the Gospel – as Jesus says to the disciples and to us, “whoever is not against us, is with us”! We do well to remember that the Holy Spirit is bound to the church, but is not bound by the church. The spirit of God moves among all people!

In the letter of James, we are warned about how we use our financial prosperity, our talents and our access to various resources to feather our own nest, if you will, and neglect to use our resources to benefit God’s kingdom in service to the less fortunate among us. He pulls no punches when he tells us what will happen to our heavenly reward when we choose to ignore the cries of the poor or those that we have cheated! St. Ignatius of Loyola, in his Spiritual Exercises – which we will have an opportunity to learn more about in October-(be sure and take a look at the notice in the bulletin)- put it plainly:

What have **I done** for Christ?, What am **I doing** for Christ?, What **Should I be doing** for Christ?

To borrow a very familiar phrase from a very different context, Ask not what the Lord can do for you, but, what can you do for the Lord?

James makes it clear: our possessions, if hoarded, do nothing but put roadblocks on the road to salvation, if our possessions **posses** us. If we, on the other, hand use our possessions to spread wealth that benefits others, we will find spiritual prosperity at the end of our journey.

Finally, in the Gospel, we hear first hand from Jesus the chilling words of what must be done to avoid the ever present temptation that lead us to the occasion of sin. Temptation is a fact of life; has been since the Garden of Eden. We all face temptation – even Jesus was tempted mightily by Satan. In our worldly life, we seek honors, power and material possessions; in the flesh, we are tempted to succumb to physical pleasure and moral laziness. Then the biggest challenge of all- the Devil, always ready to confuse us. Always present, blurring the line between right or wrong, good and evil; tempting us to overrule our conscience by spreading gossip. When we pass on innuendo, gossip, hearsay or conjecture, we **become** the temptation that can cause **others** to sin!

Jesus gives a very dramatic solution:

If your eyes, arms or legs cause you to sin, cut them off. Now if we followed that advice literally, most of us would be in BIG trouble! But, I suggest that we can still follow His advice as it relates to our lives today!

If abuse of the internet is causing us to sin – **BLOCK IT!**

If a CD or DVD is causing us to sin – **TRASH IT!**

If an addiction to T.V. is causing us to sin – **TURN IT OFF** and read a book to yourself or, better yet, your children, grandchildren or someone who cannot read for themselves.

If a relationship or friendship leads to the occasion of sin – **END IT!**

If gossip or scandal or spreading rumors about others causes us to be sinners – **STOP IT!**

To do these things takes a tremendous effort and can be very painful, but, Jesus Himself assures us it is nothing compared to the fires of Gehenna! He even gives us a powerful tool to use – prayer. Prayer strengthens us, reminds us of His constant presence and allows us to refocus on what makes our lives truly valuable as His children in this world and the next!

Yes, today we have a triple play.

In the Book of Numbers, we are called to recognize our allies, not just our enemies, and support our allies doing the work of God.

St. James reminds us of the true value of and use of our assets for the purpose of God's people, and in our Gospel,

Jesus calls us to put temptation and Satan out of our lives.

How we follow these wise suggestions from scripture will tell us a lot about ourselves and where we are on the road to salvation!

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