

ANYONE WHO IS NOT AGAINST US IS FOR US  
26th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 26 SEPTEMBER 2021



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### THE GOSPEL & HUMAN NATURE

This Sunday's gospel is an interesting commentary on human nature, then and now. We can recognise ourselves clearly in this gospel.

*At that time, 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.*

*"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,  
it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck  
and he were thrown into the sea.  
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 Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire.  
And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off.  
It is better for you to enter into life crippled  
than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna.  
And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.  
Better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye  
than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna,  
where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'"*

The disciples complained to Jesus that an exorcist was casting out devils in his name. They tried to stop him though he was successful. The reason? He was not one of the bands of disciples! He was an outsider and had no right to do works, good works admittedly in the name of Jesus because he did not belong!

Besides, his actions undermined their legitimacy as the inner group with Jesus. Previously, the gospel of Mark describes how the disciples were walking along discussing who was the greatest among them. They had their minds and hearts on the prize of being powerful people, these men from Galilee. They had not heard the whole message about suffering and rejection yet. We, like them, hear what we want to hear.

*We do like to be organised, the Church is highly organised, but we can get carried away. We easily believe that God must act within strictly defined limits. We have determined it be the right way. There are small steps from thinking about these actions as truth to becoming 'the truth'.*

A group of Jewish Christians from Jerusalem tried to stop Paul because he was not one of their group.' ( Gal 2:4 and Acts 15: 24-25). We acknowledge the severe tensions in our Church in the world where this dynamic is like the Covid-19 virus. This is not discussion about the Tradition of the Church but rather resentment towards others who do not think like us and therefore should not belong!

Jesus was clear in rejecting their outlook.

His words are strong as they often are when the disciples are not thinking with God's attitudes. Was Peter still thinking of the strong rebuke he received from Jesus at Caesarea Philippi?

The gospel says acceptance and hospitality shown to the disciple of Jesus will be rewarded. The disciple is the one witnessing to and spreading the news of the kingdom. The person giving even a cup of water will receive a reward.

It has to be said that disciples are not just beneficiaries of other people's tolerances, but they must act similarly. Tolerant actions and tolerant attitudes come from the same place – the heart.

Jesus has already stunned the Pharisees with his insight about the evil acts which are concocted in the human heart and then let loose on the world.

He warns against bringing down or confusing the people who have a simple and uncomplicated faith. Let us try to deepen our own faith and the faith of our brothers and sisters. No sacrifice is too challenging to secure the wholeness of life now. Chopping off limbs is figurative not literal. We keep moving forward trusting in God revealed in Jesus to enjoy the reign of God's kingdom.

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Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/092621.cfm>