

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

Anyone who is not against us is for us. If your hand should cause you to sin, cut it off.

John said to Jesus, 'Master, we saw a man who is not one of us casting out devils in your name; and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him.' But Jesus said, 'You must not stop him: no one who works a miracle in my name is likely to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us.'

'If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink just because you belong to Christ, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward.'

'But anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have faith, would be better thrown into the sea with a great millstone round his neck. And if your hand should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life crippled, than to have two hands and go to hell, into the fire that cannot be put out. And if your foot should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye should cause you to sin, tear it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell where their worm does not die nor their fire go out.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Breaking Open the Word

SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY AND GENEROSITY

The proper use of spiritual authority is treated in today's readings where both Israel's elders and Jesus' disciples are called to generosity of spirit. The elders have had a brief taste of sharing in Moses' prophetic ministry but it has passed. Upset by the fact that Eldad and Medad are prophesying when they cannot, leads them to ask Moses to intervene.

The scenario is somewhat different for the disciples but both the elders and the disciples saw themselves as sharing in the power and authority of Moses and Jesus respectively. Neither group took lightly the fact that others might have been able to share in this without reference to them. The issue for Jesus and for Moses is not who exercises spiritual authority but what they achieve by it. The disciples are challenged to look deeper into the matter, and into their own hearts, to see that their primary concern should be that of making sure that the word is preached to the little ones. Furthermore, they are strongly challenged to make sure they do not become the means by which others are led to lose their faith by their own poor example.

The elders and disciples were called to have open and generous hearts on the question of who can exercise spiritual authority. James calls us to being generous and just in the matter of the use of our material resources. The letter has been insistent in confronting us with any lack of consistency between what we profess and how we act, particularly towards those who are disadvantaged.

Christopher Monaghan CP

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / B

FIRST READING

Num 11:25-29

A reading from the book of Numbers.

Are you jealous on my account? Who decrees that all people may prophesy?

The Lord came down in the Cloud. He spoke with Moses, but took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. When the spirit came on them they prophesied, but not again.

Two men had stayed back in the camp; one was called Eldad and the other Medad. The spirit came down on them; though they had not gone to the Tent, their names were enrolled among the rest. 'These began to prophesy in the camp. The young man ran to tell this to Moses, 'Look,' he said, 'Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.' Then said Joshua the son of Nun, who had served Moses from his youth, 'My Lord Moses, stop them!' Moses answered him, 'Are you jealous on my account? If only the whole people of the Lord were prophets, and the Lord gave his Spirit to them all!'

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 18:8, 10, 12-14, R. v. 9

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

1. The law of the Lord is perfect, / it revives the soul. / The rule of the Lord is to be trusted, / it gives wisdom to the simple. **R.**
2. The fear of the Lord is holy, / abiding for ever. / The decrees of the Lord are truth / and all of them just. **R.**
3. So in them your servant finds instruction; / great reward is in their keeping. / But who can detect all his errors? / From hidden faults acquit me. **R.**
4. From presumption restrain your servant / and let it not rule me. / Then shall I be blameless, / clean from grave sin. **R.**



James 5:1-6

SECOND READING

A reading from the letter of St James.

Your wealth is rotting.

An answer for the rich. Start crying, weep for the miseries that are coming to you. Your wealth is all rotting, your clothes are all eaten up by moths. All your gold and your silver are corroding away, and the same corrosion will be your own sentence, and eat into your body. It was a burning fire that you stored up as your treasure for the last days. Labourers mowed your fields, and you cheated them – listen to the wages that you kept back, calling out; realise that the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. On earth you have had a life of comfort and luxury; in the time of slaughter you went on eating to your heart's content. It was you who condemned the innocent and killed them; they offered you no resistance.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Your word, O Lord, is truth; make us holy in the truth. Alleluia!

cf. Jn 17:17