

Read

Numbers 11:25-29

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

James 5:1-6

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

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 29, 2024



REFLECTION

In today's Gospel, we see the disciples are struggling with the idea of some outsider performing miracles in the name of Jesus. Rather than seeing it as an "us-against-them" situation, Jesus views it as "good-versus-evil." The other person is not against Jesus but is doing good even if he doesn't follow Christ. Goodness comes from God, goodness leads us to God, and goodness will be rewarded by God.

So then what is the evil that this goodness is against? In the second half of the Gospel, Jesus tells us: sin and temptation. We must guard against this because sin leads us away from God. When we sin, we are working against Jesus and do not do good. Jesus specifically warns his followers against causing others to sin.

It is important to remember that our actions do not just affect us. Our actions give witness to our beliefs. They can lead others to sin or to an encounter Christ. We need to be responsible for our actions and choose the good, for the sake of our relationship with God and for the sake of leading others to God.



ACTION

While contemporary society may use the word *scandal* to indicate public moral outrage, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines it as leading others to sin. Reflecting on today's Gospel passage, we could talk about "scandal" in terms of Christ being morally outraged by what we have done. This week, reflect honestly on the influence you have on friends, cousins, and younger siblings. Have your example and words led them to goodness or evil? How might you change your actions to invite them to a deeper relationship with God?



Read what the Catechism has to say about scandal (numbers 2284-2287).

<https://ltp.org/s/catechism>

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Do you find yourself struggling with jealousy or affirming goodness when you see it?
- ❖ How can you guard yourself against sin?



September 29, 2024

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #137B

Numbers 11:25-29

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James 5:1-6

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

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Last week, we heard about the disciples arguing about who was the greatest. This week they are upset that someone outside of their group is using the name of Jesus to heal. In both instances, we can see the human frailty of the disciples. They are struggling with jealousy. Jesus affirms that those who heal in his name are on his side. As followers of Christ, our jealousies and insecurities can become obstacles for other's belief. The teens are reminded to trust in their identity as sons and daughters of God and to work together to build up the kingdom of God.

Q FOCUS: *In our human weakness we can often feel jealous, but Jesus calls us to trust.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On September 29, the Church celebrates the feast of the archangels, St. Michael, St. Gabriel, and St. Raphael. These archangels are mentioned in the Bible and are an important part of our faith tradition. Michael is mentioned in the Old Testament and in the New Testament and is known for leading the heavenly armies against the forces of Satan. Gabriel is also mentioned in the Old Testament and the New Testament, but is best known as the one who announced the good news to Mary of her conception of Jesus. Raphael is mentioned in the Old Testament

in the Book of Tobit and is associated with healing. Like other saints, we can call on the archangels to pray for us and to help us.

Church Teaching Connection

"Therefore if a stranger to the community does good works in the Christ's name, so long as he does so with upright intentions and with respect, members of the Church must not feel jealous but must rejoice. Even within the Church, people can find it difficult, in the spirit of deep communion, to value and appreciate good things achieved by different ecclesial entities. Instead, we must all and always be able to appreciate one another, praising God for the infinite 'creativity' with which he acts in the Church and in the world" (Pope Benedict XVI, Angelus Message, September 30, 2012).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

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

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

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.’”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

► **Have you ever felt jealous of another person? What kind of thoughts and emotions did you experience?**

In this week's Gospel, the disciples of Jesus are worried about another person who was casting out demons in the Lord's name. They didn't like it because that person was not part of their group.

Several chapters before the one we read today, Jesus sent his own disciples out to heal and cast out demons (see Mark 6:7-13) and they were successful. They were able to accomplish things that Jesus himself did. It must have been incredible! They must have gained a certain level of recognition from performing such works among many people. So when

they saw another person doing the same thing, they were concerned.

We might imagine their inner thoughts: “Who is this person and how could he do this? He isn't one of us. Jesus didn't send him out with us to do these great works. He's not in our inner circle. He shouldn't have access to this grace. That power belongs to us.” They were jealous of this man who was doing what they thought they had been set apart to do. They might have also been confused—they hadn't seen anyone doing these things the way Jesus could, so how was this person able to do it?

► **How can you help someone overcome their feelings of jealousy?**

Jesus responds to their feelings of jealousy by acknowledging and listening to their concerns (he doesn't ignore them) and tries to move them forward. He tells them that a person could not cast out demons in his name if that person was against him. There is enough room in God's kingdom for all who want to be part of it! The efforts of the disciples and Jesus in spreading the Good News were bearing fruit, others were coming to believe in Jesus.

The disciples were so wrapped up in the trappings of the world, of being known and of being part of the “in crowd,” that they forgot the greatest blessing of all: Jesus' presence and being a part of *his* mission. They became insecure in the face of someone else doing something they thought only they could participate in.

Our own insecurities and petty jealousies can get in the way of our growth as Christians. They can even become obstacles for others to grow in their faith. Just like the disciples, we might get wrapped up in being known as the best. We might even worry that the little we have will be taken away. This mentality could lead to a type of “spiritual selfishness” where we only want the good for ourselves and do not want to share it with others. It may even stop us from sharing the Good News with our friends in need.

► **What are some examples of fears or insecurities (jealousy, peer pressure, perceived lack of knowledge, and so on) that might stop someone from sharing their faith?**

We have all felt the sting of jealousy and have felt that we are not good enough. These are not pleasant feelings. When these feelings occur, it is important to go back to our foundational beliefs: We are the beloved sons and daughters of God. Jesus calls us to follow him. He gave his life for us so that we might live for him. We can trust in his love for us.

If jealousy and insecurity are a part of your life, it is time to take decisive action. In the second half of the Gospel reading, we are told that we must cut out the sinful parts of our lives. Stop listening to the lies of Satan and trust in Jesus' word. Lift up your jealousy in prayer to Jesus and offer all your actions for the work of the kingdom of God.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 38.

The disciples felt jealous of others performing mighty works in the name of Jesus.

Our own jealousy and insecurities can become obstacles to sharing the Good News.

Have faith and believe in God's promise. He loves you and calls you to share in his mission.

Act on the Word

Strength Circle

For this activity, you will need paper and pens or pencils for each participant.

Jealousy often stems from feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem. To combat that, today's activity will focus on affirming the goodness of each member in the group. If there are members in the group who are new or don't know each other that well, then some brief "get to know you" activities should happen before this activity.

Have the teens form a circle with their chairs so that all the chairs are facing the same way. Give the teens paper and pens and have each person write their name at the top of their piece of paper. When everyone has written their name, each person will

pass the paper to the person behind them. Now everyone in the circle will have a new piece of paper.

Underneath the name, the teens will write a compliment about the person whose name is at the top of the paper. This compliment should focus on qualities of that person, not just superficial things like articles of clothing, or generic phrases like "You are nice." The compliment should be specific and concrete.

Everyone in the circle is writing at the same time. After the first compliment (or strength) is written, each person will hand the paper to the person behind them. Now everyone has a new paper with a name and a compliment. They will write another compliment for the person whose name is on the paper. This process will continue until the papers have been passed around the entire circle and return to the person whose name is on the top of the paper.

Give some time for everyone to read the compliments written on their paper. Then take some time to process the experience. Move the chairs into an inward facing circle. Some questions to reflect on as a group include asking them how it felt to write compliments for others, how it felt to read compliments about themselves, which compliment stood out to them the most, and if they could compliment themselves, what would they say.

Closing Prayer

*Providential God,
you are leading all men and women to yourself,
though often by different paths.*

*Inspire us to recognize the good works of
all people,*

*to encourage them, to be influenced by them,
and to always praise you, their source.*

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.