



26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE B

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An exorcist who was not one of the inner group of disciples was casting out demons in Jesus' name. The disciples tried to stop him, but Jesus was more tolerant, noting that someone using his name for good would not be likely to speak ill of him. Jesus enunciates a good principle for the church in any age - whoever is not against us is for us. Even someone who gives a disciple a drink of water because he bears Jesus' name will be rewarded.

This leads to a series of sayings about temptation and scandal of the "little ones," which probably refers to any believers, though it certainly applies to children as well.

The recommendations for dealing with temptation sound quite harsh and are not meant to be taken literally. One eye or one foot would be no more guilty than the other. It was common to make strong points with such exaggerations. These sayings may also be intended by Mark to apply to the early church - those who were not living up to the Christian way of life were giving scandal in the community. Because the community is the body of Christ, cutting off body parts may refer to excommunicating sinful members.

After Jesus had finished teaching the disciples, John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us."

For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea.

If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire.

And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched."