

26th Sun OT – Mark 9:38-48

John objects to the activity of a stranger who was casting out demons in the ***name of Jesus***, yet did not belong to John's group. We may suspect jealousy in John and his friends, because, though the Twelve were given power at their call to cast out demons, they had failed to do so in the incident of the epileptic boy.

Jesus bluntly condemned John. Like Peter, he was still thinking the thoughts of men. Whoever uses the ***name of Jesus***, cannot be his enemy. His real enemies are the hardhearted Pharisees and the Scribes who sin against the Holy Spirit. The incident is remarkably like that of Moses, Joshua and the unknown prophets, Eldad and Meldad. The promise of Jesus that follows, of a reward to anyone who gives a cup of water to his disciples depends on the same phrase. The disciples are those who are ***in the name of Jesus***.

This key phrase "in the Name of Jesus" is easy for the catechist to remember in the early church. We are so used to it today that it has almost lost its meaning and power. Remember, the evangelist Mark was a follower of Paul, whose hymn to the Philippians is one of most beautiful and profound. It ends with this,

"Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name, which is above every name, that at ***the name of Jesus*** every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The word ***scandalize*** binds together the sayings of the second half of our passage. If the first in the kingdom are those who have become like ***children***, the little ones, then no penalty can be too severe for the one who causes them to stumble in their faith. The uses of the word scandalize that follow, either concern the individual believer or the community as a whole, since the community was often compared to a body. The loss of a hand, a foot or an eye is obviously a hyperbolic expression, but even Paul used strong language to remind himself that salvation was not guaranteed.

It is not surprising that Paul also mentioned Jesus' humility in same prayer in the letter to the Philippians. "...being born in the likeness of men. And being

found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross," the obedience of a child to his Father.

Jesus' death on the cross *was* a scandal in the early Christians. Jesus as the Son of God was even more difficult for us to grasp, even today. That is why the Church tends to swing between Jesus as *God* and Jesus as *Man* in its emphasis on its theological understanding. This ties in with last week's gospel passage, "And who do you say I am?"

In the early Church, most of the heresies were Christological emphasizing Jesus the *Man* or Christ the *God*. Peter answers the first time, two weeks ago, that "You are the Christ." Last week Peter and the other disciples are silent, because they were arguing who was the greatest! And Jesus uses a child the first time as an example. "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me."

Again, Paul emphasizes this in his hymn to the Philippians, "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves...Have this mind among yourselves, ***which was in Christ Jesus***, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but ***emptied*** himself." The Greek word for emptied is "kenotic" by which this hymn was titled.

To be like a child, we need to empty ourselves of whatever gets in the way of God, so that we can become more like Christ. I am sure that there was no event greater that emptied Mary, the mother of Christ, than standing at the foot of the cross. Imagine seeing the very life of her son pass away before her. It would have been enough anyone of their belief, the scandal of the cross where two of the people who loved Jesus the most in the world, "who humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross."

That is why Marianists take this scene as their main motif, Mary and John at the foot of the cross. I hope you will join me with Bro. David Betz at our next Marianist Presentation on Mary, since this is how you will learn more about the Society of Mary, is learning more about Mary, the Mother of Jesus.