

**Sept. 26, 2021**

**Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Nm 11:25-29

Jas 5:1-6

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

**GROW:** Today's graphic Gospel passage always sounds a bit jarring: "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off." Upon first reading that passage, our response might be, "What?" But upon further reflection, it strikes me that Jesus is challenging us to attend to what *causes* us to sin: the vices we have acquired, the temptations we do not ignore, the sinful thoughts and behaviors we entertain or in which we engage. It is also important to identify where we might be culpable in leading *others* astray. In all of this, Jesus is asking us to be honest with ourselves and to take the necessary steps to "cut" out of our lives the things that lead us away from the Lord, rather than allowing us to move toward him. Lest we get discouraged, we need only remember that we are not alone: We belong to Christ whose word is truth, whose precepts "give joy to the heart," and who tells us "whoever is not against us is for us." Like Moses in the first reading, we can ask that the Spirit descend upon us and give us strength.

**GO:** Amazing feats we see on TV or read in the news can't help but capture our imagination. Our rich Catholic faith can be a little like that: just take a look at the lives of the saints. That's why I find the other passage in today's Gospel so encouraging. Jesus reminds us that even the smallest things we do matter – actions to help others grow in their faith: "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." As the Lord's spirit moves us to be a prophet to others – that is, to perform deeds in his name (mighty or not-so-mighty) – we have the ability to witness the Gospel of Jesus Christ in very real and concrete ways. As St. Teresa of Ávila said: "Accustom yourself continually to make many acts of love, for they enkindle and melt the soul."

**ACTIONS:** Prepare for the sacrament of reconciliation by asking Jesus to help you identify what causes you to sin or drives a wedge between you and others or between you and God. Then participate in this beautiful sacrament and pray for the grace to make changes.