

The Zeal of Charity

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle C

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Mark 9: 38-40.

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."

Mark 9:38-40.

Introductory Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I believe in you and in all the expressions of your goodness and love in my life. I believe in your Eucharist, where you have made yourself my bread and a prisoner of love to teach me goodness of heart. I trust that you can train my heart to react more as you do, with forgiveness and blessing. I love you, Lord; I wish to love you with my prayer and increased charity. Mary, teach me to love with the heart of your son.

Petition:

Make my heart more like yours, Lord.

1. A Son of Thunder:

The young apostle says with uncontrolled fervor, "We tried to prevent him." They obviously acted first and consulted Jesus only afterwards. What moved them? What so often moves us—a sense of righteous zeal! We know or think we know what is right. "Let no one step out of line, or we will let him know!" Moreover, this person "does not follow us," so he should not be able to act in your name! What is this "Son of Thunder" missing? Is not the mightiest deed an act of charity? How often do I make rash judgments without really knowing the full picture and without consulting Jesus first?

2. Judgments of Gospel Charity:

Jesus does not hesitate to offer a positive judgment. Mighty deeds in his name can be found only in one speaking well of him. Moreover, beyond logic, Jesus possesses a deeper insight. He reads all actions with a heart of charity. His judgments will always be colored by his looking to find the very best in each person. His every action will be interpreted by love. In such manner he interprets well the actions of the woman who wipes his feet with her tears and hair, of the paralytic lowered from the roof, of the tax collector who climbed a tree to see him. Do I judge others with a heart filled with gospel charity, or am I very quick to spot faults? Are my impulses modified by my experience of Christ's love for me?

3. For or Against Him?

Jesus presents a simple principle for judging. Unless a person shows himself to be against us, consider him for us. We should fight to help others be for us. "Believe all the good you hear and only believe the evil you see." This supposition of goodness runs contrary to our tendency to judge and speak evil of others with a minimum of evidence while demanding disproportionate proofs to credit them for good. Is it my job to find deformities in a member of the Body of Christ? A good person sees with eyes of goodness. Why can I not find excuses for the weakness and failings I see in others? Why is it so easy to speak poorly of others, to point out their defects and to fall into slander or gossip? Would the answer be found in the narrow or stingy dimensions of my own heart?

Conversation with Christ:

Dear Lord, grant me a heart overflowing with your love. Make charity my first reaction, my constant hope and my irresistible tendency. Open my eyes in faith to see you working in people of all backgrounds and faiths. Help me to dismiss all personal, unnecessary judgments with an assumption of charity. May I win souls with my goodness and never be without charity in my fight for your Kingdom.

Resolution:

I will counter every thought against charity with two thoughts of charity. I will counter every word against charity with two words of sincere charity for the one maligned.