



Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Mark 9: 41-50.

Jesus said to his disciples: "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. "Everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if salt becomes insipid, with what will you restore its flavor? Keep salt in yourselves and you will have peace with one another."

Introductory Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I believe in your presence in my life. I believe that you consider those around me your children and that you ardently desire to possess them with love for all eternity. I trust that you will help me treat others as your brothers and sisters. I love you now with my prayer. May this prayer increase my desire to honor and serve you with my life.

Petition:

Jesus, help me to set a good example for others out of love.

1. You Are Priceless:

Jesus leaves us with no doubt: We are valuable. We all carry within us a God-given dignity. And this dignity is identified and enhanced when we bear his name. Every human being has an intrinsic dignity because every human being is created in God's image. But this image of God is perfectly incarnated in Christ, God made man. So a baptized Christian—a Christ bearer—carries a more perfect image: Christ, in whom we are made children of God. It is little wonder, then, that Jesus assures a reward to anyone who serves us for his sake!

2. Every Little One Is Priceless:

To carry his image is also a responsibility. We must live up to this dignity and show to others a life worthy of the image we carry within. Others may be "little" due to their age, the newness and immaturity of their Christian life, or even their weakness and struggle. We put a stumbling block in their way, we scandalize them, when our behavior causes them to doubt or become discouraged about living the ideals of faith. A "millstone"

suggests that anything would be better for us than this. How damaging then are my bad examples given to "little ones"! Damaging for them and for me! What can I do to avoid such scandal? On the other hand, what a great reward awaits those who do the contrary, giving these little ones good example! If I loved "these little ones" just half as much as Jesus does, would it not be much easier to avoid giving bad example?

3. Better to Lose Anything Else:

In today's world, the value of something is measured in comparison to other items of the same kind: stocks, food, clothes, even music and films are judged against each other. Yet, there are some things that have absolute value: the value of a soul. Nothing compares! Jesus paints this total non-comparison in terms of cutting off whatever becomes an obstacle. You are so valuable that you must be ready to deny, subdue, silence and even sacrifice your own body, or any of its members, rather than risk losing your soul. Do I value my immortal soul, my vocation to eternal life? If so, do I show this by the self-denial I exert in controlling what makes me (and eventually others through me) stumble? How often do I prefer my "things" to the loved ones who depend on my example of Christ? How radical is my faith?

Conversation with Christ:

Lord Jesus, open my eyes to understand a little more just how valuable I am to you, how priceless my eternal life is. Make me sensitive to value each and every person in my life. I know you want me to help save them. Never allow me to become a stumbling block for anyone. If I have, may my love and efforts of faith be used by you now to restore what was lost.

Resolution:

I will repair a past act of "scandal" (outburst of anger, foul language, gossip or slander, dishonesty, etc.) with a period of quality time given to the "little ones" so as to rebuild the trust and Christ-like behavior they expect from me.