

SEPTEMBER 19, 2021
Sunday of the 26th Week in Ordinary Time
Mark 9: 38-43, 45, 47-48

“CUT IT OFF.”

“In 2003, in the beautiful but desolate mountains of southeastern Utah, a twenty-seven-year-old mountain climber named Aron Ralston, made a desperate decision. An avid outdoors man, Aron was rock-climbing one day when his right arm became trapped under a boulder, a boulder estimated to weigh at least eight hundred pounds. He saw immediately that he was in deep trouble. Unable to budge the rock at all, Aron took out his pocketknife and chipped away at the rock for 10 hours, managing to produce only a small handful of dust. Obviously, this was not going to work. Days were passing. No one knew where he was. Even worse, his family and friends were used to his going off for days without contacting anyone, so they were not even looking for him. With his arm still wedged beneath this enormous boulder Aron Ralston recorded a video message to his parents telling them good-bye. At the end of several days with no food or water, however, Aron made a remarkable choice. Aron Ralston decided to amputate his arm in order to save himself. And that’s exactly what he did, using only a pocketknife. What an amazing display of courage and determination! After he was finished, he applied a tourniquet to his arm and rappelled nearly 70 feet to the floor of the canyon. Then he hiked five miles downstream where he encountered some other hikers and was rescued. Aron Ralston made the obviously excruciating decision to amputate his right arm to save his life. Aron Ralston certainly made that choice – to sacrifice his arm in order to save his life. There are choices that must be made in life, and those choices determine our destiny.”¹

¹ stories4homilies.blogspot.com

My brothers and sisters, in our First Reading, we find jealousy, a form of envy, went into Joshua, Moses' assistant. Moses and the seventy elders were called by the Lord and the spirit rested on them. Two of those seventy were not present but still the spirit rested on them. Hearing even they were not in the tent of meeting, they prophesied in the camp, an indignant and jealous Joshua told Moses to stop them. Moses told him: "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!"² Moses taught Joshua the virtue of tolerance, patience and acceptance, a direct reference to our gospel for today. The first reading is giving us insight how to be tolerant to others, called to accept our differences in the eyes of God, and be patient to those people not part of our own group or community. While in our Responsorial Psalm, it reminds us that following the precepts of the Lord will draw us nearer to God, stronger and so give us eternal joy in His presence. In our Second Reading, St. James is teaching us justice in our every actions. James cautions the rich against denying social justice to their own workers by ignoring and declining to give proper compensation, living wages and needs of others which is a horrible act of discrimination and injustice, equivalent to murder in the agricultural economy of the ancient Middle East. We are being reminded by St. James that we must bring social justice to every person we encounter whether within our family, community and society. An act of injustice, withholding what is due, is an act of murder to people working for us and in need of our assistance. As Christians, by the Sacrament of Baptism, we are committed to promote love and peace, be just and tolerant. In our gospel from St. Mark, Jesus taught His apostles how to be tolerant when John complained about those 'outsider' from their group who were doing good deeds exorcising demons in Jesus' Name. Jesus is telling His disciples "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."³

² Numbers 11: 29 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

³ Mark 9: 40-41 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

Jesus further taught His disciples “against giving scandal, especially to innocent children, to vulnerable members of the community, and to beginners in the Faith. Jesus instructed the Apostles, and us, that, just as a doctor might remove by surgery a limb or some part of the body to preserve the life of the whole body, so we must be ready to part with anything that causes us or others to sin and which leads to spiritual death. We are also called and encouraged to bear with the weaknesses of others (without condoning the evil they do), by: a) remaining true to our conscience and beliefs, b) respecting the differences we encounter, c) working together on projects of common interest, d) affirming what is good in the other person’s position, even when we disagree on certain things, and e) allowing the light of Christ to shine through our loving words and deeds.”⁴

My brothers and sisters, are we ready to cut off all prejudices, wrong attitude to others, and even control our tongue in saying bad things and stop gossiping? Are we ready to cut off things that hinder us to come closer to God like pornography, scandal, fake news and face accusations? Like Aron in our story, are we ready to sacrifice anything to save our lives, to think and act for the greater glory of God? Let us ask therefore in this Eucharist the strength to cut off anything that obstruct us to become better person and better Christians.

Let this be our prayer pattern after St. Francis Peace Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, ‘make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.’ May my brothers and sisters, discover that only in You, they can have new life and joy, freedom from sin and oppression. Amen.”

⁴ frtonyshomilies.com