



## Things to Ponder

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## **Homily Reflections – Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48**

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### **Introduction: It's Not About Me!**

This Sunday we continue to read from the Gospel of Mark. Recall that last week we heard Jesus chastise his disciples for their silly argument about who among them was the greatest. In this weekend's Gospel, the disciple, John, foolishly questions Jesus about an unknown healer who was healing in Jesus' name. "Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us." In this scene, the disciple ironically exhibits a worldly and competitive sense of ministry. Here Mark is highlighting that discipleship is not some personal privilege to be jealously guarded. We have no monopoly on Jesus!

### *Have I ever thought I have a corner on God's grace?*

Mark then gives Jesus' pithy response: "Do not prevent him!" This is a further instruction in faithful discipleship as being one who serves others, cooperates with others, sees good in others, but not one who seeks to be superior or exclusive. There should not be any jealousy or sense of competition in our walk of discipleship and ministry. You and I are not playing a power game. In a nutshell, Jesus is saying to us: "It's not about you!"

### *How do I view ministry? Is it open-ended? Closed?*

Later in this Gospel, Jesus teaches us not to create obstacles for those who are just beginning to have faith (especially children, youth), but to encourage even the smallest signs of faith. The Greek word used here for sin also connotes "stumbling" or "causing scandal." Some biblical scholars believe Jesus' emphatic words are a stark warning against the sexual abuse of children: "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin . . . ."

***How can I be a better example for those who are young or new to the faith?***

Mark concludes this passage by emphasizing that the stakes are high if we want to live out the values of the Kingdom of God. Jesus drives this point home by deliberately exaggerating that the “hand,” “foot,” and “eye” represent anything that causes one to sin. This is a strict warning on discipline and the inevitable repercussions of our actions. Each of our decisions and actions affects the community as a whole, the body of Christ.

***Can I identify a time when I was an obstacle or stumbling block to another person’s growth in faith?***

I would invite you to take time to read and ponder words from the *Gospel of Mark 9: 38-43, 45, 47-48*.

What word or words caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

### **Further Questions and Reflections:**

The followers of Jesus are not meant to be an exclusive group which looks down on the good work that others do. We are encouraged to work with other Christian denominations and religious traditions. ***Does this excite you? Threaten you?***

Boasting has no place in the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit blows like the wind wherever it pleases – and is at work incognito in every heart. God has a large imagination and labors to orchestrate all things for the world’s good.

***How wide is your imagination?***

Ponder: Our perspectives can be quite narrow. Our need for affirmation and security can make us try to control situations which we don’t understand well.

Recall in your own life those to whom you are deeply indebted for the good advice and example you received from them. ***Name those people who were stepping stones on your life journey.***

Prayer: Lord, self-renunciation and attention to the needs of our brothers and sisters are the hallmark of belonging to you. You call me to be a stepping stone for others, not a stumbling block.

Lord, thank you for making me part of your work-force! It’s not about

me. It's about you!

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