

26<sup>th</sup> Sunday (B)

27<sup>th</sup> September 2015

‘Cut it out!’

Num 11: *If only all the people of God were prophets!*      Ps 18: *from  
presumption restrain your servant*      James 5: *your wealth is all rotting!*  
Mk 9: 38–48: *if your hand ... foot ... eye should cause you to sin ...*

Three major things jump out, for me, in today’s short little Gospel passage: (i) not being negative about people who are trying to come to Christ; (ii) giving even the cup of water to a little one; (iii) making sure that we cut out of our lives the things that lead us to sin. So, even in this short passage of teaching Jesus has something to say about our personal love of God; the attitude to our immediate neighbour; and our practical charity. Our Lord’s challenge is never one-sided, or just about how we can do practical good to others: it’s always about love of God AND love of neighbour. We’re going to hear, after Holy Communion, about the work of CaFOD as we come up to this year’s Harvest Fast Day (on Friday). This, we could say, is making sure that we ‘give the cup of water to someone in need’ that Jesus speaks of. It asks us to give up to food, to save some money: that is, to fast, and so to benefit another person who is hungry. So I will leave that element of the Gospel to then.

But what of the other, more deep-seated dimension of Christ’s words, maybe more unsettling? What should we be cutting out of our lives entirely in order to save us from sin?

Jesus is using graphic imagery about the severing of limbs; that’s to get us to listen up. But He certainly does mean that we need to cut things out that do us harm spiritually. It’s not easy! I know that some years ago, when I moved from Enfield to Poplar, after being in a Presbytery with a communal TV, I brought my own TV out of storage and started watching it again ... but after only a week or so I decided I had to “cut it out” ... I put it back in the box and put the box in the cupboard. Why? Because I was watching it too much, far too late, and being tempted to watch stuff that wasn’t decent. Since then I have never watched live TV on any regular basis — I try instead to watch things of my own specific choosing online on the iPlayer.

This is just one example, and it doesn’t mean to say that I have succeeded in being good at this every time ... but on that occasion, 13½ yrs ago, I managed to put Jesus words into practice: to cut something out that was unhelpful to my spiritual life. It was a moment of grace, ... and we all need those much more often. So, in response to Jesus, what is it that we need to cut out at this time? What do we know is causing us to sin, or tempting us to sin? In a moment of silent prayer let’s ask the Lord to give us the grace to see what that might be, and the courage to act on it ...