

# Opening the Word: Whoever gives



The disciples don't want anyone else performing wonders in the name of Jesus. After all, that's their job. They are the ones who are following Jesus from town to town. They are the ones who are receiving Christ's wisdom. These wonder workers are unqualified for the task at hand. Therefore, the disciples conclude, they should stop.

Not so fast, Jesus reminds the disciples.

No one who speaks in the name of Jesus, who gives a cup of cold water to a disciple because they are Christ's, will be forgotten.

Their reward – whether or not they are learned scribes in the kingdom of God – is secured. Jesus, in the Gospel of Mark, doesn't stop with this lesson. He continues on.

[September 26 –  
Twenty-sixth Sunday  
in Ordinary Time](#)

Nm 11:25-29  
Ps 19:8, 10, 12-13,  
14  
Jas 5:1-6  
Mk 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

Further, don't you recognize, beloved disciples, what it means to follow me in the first place? If you want to speak in my name, don't you know your responsibility for the little ones? If you cause one of the little ones to sin, it is better for a [millstone](#) to be thrown [around your neck](#). For you to sink to the bottom of the ocean.

Further, look, dear disciples, at yourselves. Forget about rivalry, about those who speak the name of Jesus and work wonders. [Worry about your own sins](#). If your hand or your eye causes you to sin, cut it off.

The language is radical. Not meant to encourage us to cut off limbs. But to take sin seriously.

This, dear disciples, is what you have to worry about. Jesus speaks his words to all the religious orders and apostolates of Catholicism today.

Let's just admit that among the apostolates in the Church, there are rivalries. You have to accompany people just like FOCUS does, or you're doing it wrong. You have to follow the way of Word on Fire, or you've screwed it up. Benedictines get it right. Not like the Jesuits. The Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia is an excellent religious order, unlike those Mercy Sisters.

Jesus speaks anew to us. He tells us to stop. Stop it.

If you speak in the name of Jesus, then keep it up. Worry not about others, about your competitors (a dreadful word infiltrating the Church from the domain of marketing).

Worry about yourself.

But how do we know if we are causing one of the little ones to sin? How do we know if we should cut off our right hand to avoid Gehenna, to enter the kingdom of God?

Again, St. James' voice cries out. "Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries" (Jas 5:1).

If our apostolates, religious communities, our educational institutions and our parishes become places where the goal is to build up wealth or brand equity, it's time to weep. It's time to wail.

No matter our marketability, the quality of our brand, if we withhold wages from the worker (paying staff unjust wages), if we live in luxury while those in our neighborhoods experience the blight of poverty, it's time to weep.

To weep and to change. The time is now. For a disciple of Jesus Christ, there is only one aspect of our "brand" that matters. Poverty. The kind of poverty that led St. Francis of Assisi to kiss the flesh of the leper, to give everything away, to rejoice in the birds of the field. A poverty of peace, of communion, and friendship. In the end, St. Francis followed our beloved Jesus, conforming himself to the poor Son of a glorious Father.

That was his brand. And it must also be ours. Lest we enter not into the kingdom of heaven but into the unquenchable fire of Gehenna.

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