

**Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time - B - '2018**  
**Numbers 11.25-29///James 5.1-6///Mark 9.38-45,47-48**

→a few weeks ago I was down in Florida visiting a friend of mine who I met when I was at my first parish in Canton...in fact....I baptized his three children who are now grown up and thinking about marriage...

→back then he and I use to play golf on a fairly regular basis but as time moved on and we both got busier and eventually both of our golf games fell by the wayside....

→well....while I was visiting he insisted that we go out and play nine holes...for old times' sake...and after playing a round I came to the conclusion that golf still isn't my game especially when the ball goes everywhere but where you want it to go.

→what I still find amazing about golf is that to hit that little ball really takes a lot of concentration

→now that shouldn't come as a surprise because that really is the case with most anything we attempt in life

→...whether it is a test in school, or a job that needs to be done at work...or even the smallest "fix-it" task at home.....we need to be focused and concentrating on what needs to be done...if we are to get it done right and accomplish anything

→and that seems to be also the case in our gospel reading and in the other scripture readings we just heard today as well.

→we hear about the disciples....telling J. that some stranger is performing miracles in his name...and since this person was unknown and unapproved by Christ, the disciples didn't like it and so they try to get Jesus to stop him

→but Jesus answers them by saying: *"do not stop him...there is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who at the same time can speak ill of me....anyone who is not against us is with us...anyone who gives you a cup of water because you belong to Christ will not go without reward."*

→I can just picture J standing and looking around at the disciples and shaking his head .....

→because the disciples were concentrating more on this **stranger** performing miracles rather than what was happening in front of them....

→and the same scenario happens also in the first reading as well...there we have a young man quickly coming up to Moses complaining about Eldad and Medad...that they were prophesying in the camp...and so he asks Moses to put a stop to these young "upstart" prophets

→....and again Moses responds similar to Jesus...when he says: *"Are you jealous....would that all the people of the Lord were prophets...and the Lord bestow his spirit on them all!"*...

→i.o.w....Moses says...you would rather have me silence these prophets rather than listening to their words?

→and so, perhaps that is the message that comes to us today....

→ maybe we need to begin concentrating a bit more on the presence of Christ and the challenge of Christ in our lives rather than all of the seemingly unimportant obstacles that seem clutter up our lives so often

→today as we see...the disciples and the young man of the first reading were the obstacles

→so perhaps the true message for us today is for us to sharpen our focus more on Christ and his presence in our lives rather than the many obstacles that sometimes prevent us from seeing Christ in ourselves and one another

PAUSE

→[you see]...it is very easy and common to create obstacles between us and God...and that seems to be the case in the readings today

→and so, Christ, therefore, uses some strong imagery about getting rid of these obstacles

→he says if your hand or your foot or your eye is your obstacle...then get rid of it!!!

→now in reality, Christ is not advocating self-mutilation or murder but what HE IS saying is that the ONLY thing in our lives that truly matters is our search for unity and closeness to God....and anything that stops, or blocks or hinders that search and keeps us from God...is an obstacle that needs to be gotten rid of.

→[and] think for just a moment....of the many obstacles in our daily lives that keep us from knowing God

→the most obvious, of course....is "sin" but I also believe that Christ is urging us to become more aware of those not-so-obvious obstacles that often creep into our lives

→those....that perhaps we don't always recognize as obstacles but nonetheless, if gotten out of hand can certainly keep us from fully embracing Christ in our lives.

→for instance the obstacle of material possessions or worrying about whether we have enough or not

→our jobs can be obstacles when we become obsessed with recognition//or promotions

→our relationships can be obstacles to Christ when they become nothing but competition between ourselves and others

→even television and all of our electronic gadgets can become an obstacle when and if we allow them to take over our lives and eat away at our time from conversation and being with our family and friends.

→and so, I think the challenge and lesson before us today is for us to be aware of these obstacles and more importantly....to even more aware of our need to keep focus on Christ and his presence in our lives and world.

PAUSE

→the point of today's readings is simple: to focus and sharpen our attention on Christ and his message and to concentrate on what's really important in bringing about Christ's love in our lives.

→to rid ourselves of the obstacles we have and concentrate on the presence of Christ in us and one another.

→you know...whether it's in golf....and concentrating on getting the ball over the sand trap....or even in putt-putt and getting the ball through the spinning windmill

or in our lives and faith and becoming one w/Christ

→it all involves concentration....it all involves focus

→concentrating and focusing on what really matters, on what is truly important

→concentrating and focusing on Jesus Christ and his presence in our lives

→rather than all of those obstacles that seem to just get in the way.....