**Readings:** Numbers 11:25-29 / James 5:1-6/ Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48  
**Theme:** The Spirit Moves as He Wishes  
26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

Joshua thought and believed that the spirit upon Moses would be bestowed on only the seventy elders at the tent of meeting (Num. 11:25-29). Similarly, in the gospel reading, the Apostle John thought and believed that only the apostles and other close companions of Jesus Christ had the gift of the Spirit to cast out demons. However, both Joshua and St. John were wrong, for the Spirit of the Lord moves or acts as He wishes. He cannot in any way be controlled by our wishes, thoughts and hopes. The Spirit of the Lord is bigger than even our faith, for He is divine.

Whereas the Lord’s Spirit freely chooses those He wishes to use as His instruments of blessings and salvation, we are to identify (by the grace of the same Spirit) these servants of God and to support their work. When we faithfully discharge this duty, the Lord shall bless us: “I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward” (Mark 9:41).

On the other hand, the servants of God should always remember that their spiritual gifts and services are meant to glorify the Lord. They are not meant to glorify themselves at the expense of God’s people especially the innocent or “unsuspecting” ones: “if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck” (Mark 9:42). A way by which some “gifted” servants of God glorify themselves is to enrich themselves at the expense of church members (*cf*. James 5:1-6). Beloved, the workings of the Holy Spirit are not for sale!

Furthermore, to both church leaders and ordinary members, the Lord himself admonishes us to be very vigilant about actions, attitudes and things that may lead us to damnation: “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out” (Mark 9:43). To both church leaders and ordinary members, “the love of money” (1 Tim. 6:10) may lead us to damnation, so let us cut it off from our hearts, for it is better to enter heaven poor than to be recognized in hell as a rich man/woman.

Again, whereas the Spirit is free to move as He wishes, we cannot exercise absolute freedom in our movements, hence if our foot is the cause of sin we should cut it off. In other words, if the places and events we attend lead us to sin, we should stop attending them.

And, while the Spirit freely gazes everything, we cannot exercise absolute freedom of our sight. There are things which when we see do not edify other souls; rather they lead us into sin. Hence, the Lord asks us to pluck out our eye in certain circumstances. In other words, we should make the conscious effort to deny ourselves of the sight of things which lead us into sin. And we may need to persevere, with the grace of the Lord, to succeed in this.

Finally, let us surrender to the Spirit so that He prunes our souls of whatever may lead us into sin, and so that He uses us to the glory of God and for our eternal salvation. Amen!