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| 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time |
| Numbers 11:25-29 |
| James 5:1-6 |
| Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48 |

**A. Text/Context**

* We have heard that on the 1st part of the gospel the disciples were alarmed that somebody is driving out demons using the name of Jesus because that someone is not a member of the group
* Jesus simply answered: Whoever is not against us is for us. Meaning if he is not our enemy he belongs to our company
* And reading between the lines the relationship is peaceful co-existence and this is used by Jesus to explain to his disciples the meaning of loyalty
* But the real meaning of loyalty is that if your hand causes you to sin cut it off, if your foot causes you to sin cut it off, if your one eye causes you to sin pluck it out
* Because it will be better for you to enter into heaven, maimed, crippled or blinded than to be thrown into Gehenna or what the Jews call as the eternal fires of hell
* These are simply figurative statements, a hyperbole or an exaggeration used by Jesus common in their time in order to let his disciples understand the prime importance of following his teachings
* Besides, do you think that God would ever want us to enter the KOG with all the marks of physical torture? All crippled and mangled and blinded, with one eye missing, one leg or arm cut off?
* The point of Jesus is that no matter how painful or how difficult it is for us to be faithful to God’s commandments still, it is less painful compared to that of being separated away from God
* In the many spiritual readings that I have done concerning the eschatos or the last things is that both in purgatory and in hell, the most painful suffering the souls undergo is not really the pain of fire but the pain of not seeing God or the pain of the absence of God or the pain of separation from God
* The difference between the two is that in hell the vision of God is denied forever and so they curse God, but in purgatory there is always hope that one day they would soon enter heaven and see God as soon as the purgation is finished

**B. Human Situation**

* In our lives as Christians, this is the practical lessons that we experience pain and suffering because we are loyal to the Lord
* If we have a bad relationship with others there are many things that you cannot do as hindered by the sour relationship
* After a long period you get tired of it, you want to start a reconciliation, you swallow your pride and ask for forgiveness
* That is painful, but the reward of asking forgiveness and the reward of giving forgiveness is really overwhelming because relationship has become whole again and restored
* If this happens, both the offender and the offended will even celebrate
* What if for example another sudden super typhoon strikes central Philippines similar to Yolanda in 2013 followed by a storm surge that wiped out all coastal cities leaving the entire population dead?
* What could be our countenance as we face the Lord?
* We look beautiful and handsome but our mouths are so foul because we scattered a scandal that destroyed the dignity of our neighbor by revealing all the dirty secrets
* And so you have already stripped the person of dignity as a human being much worse than killing the person physically
* So we have transgressed the 8th commandment as a false witness
* We look so respectable, clean and dignified in public but our hands are dirty because we manipulated the financial report so that the money intended for services end up in our pockets. We violated the 7th commandment
* You have beautiful bodies as you care for your diet and daily regimen of workouts and as a husband or wife, as a young man and a young woman unmarried your relationship looks very ideal on the eyes of others
* But you do nasty things in secret by maintaining an illicit relationship an adulterer and a fornicator. A transgression of the 6th commandment
* And luckily, because all of us have made a confession before we are killed by the super typhoon, none of us were condemned to hell
* But the Lord says okay, you spend 3 months in purgatory, to another, 3 years, and to another because throughout your life you never believe in me, so you will stay in purgatory for 100 years
* Do you remember Fatima? Lucia once asked the Blessed Mother, where is now my friend who died?
* Mary answered: she will be in purgatory until the end of the world
* And so we got the judgment from God and the pain of being separated from God in the end which would be the most unbearable thing to happen
* That is why the prayers, the masses offered by the living will shorten the suffering of the souls in purgatory
* My dear brothers and sisters, I am not really comfortable preaching about heaven, hell or purgatory as a priest
* But look at the gospel, there is Gehenna, there is hell. No amount of academic philosophizing could mitigate or even eradicate the existence of hell. Jesus himself said so
* And it is found in the doctrines and the Magisterium of the Church that we follow
* If we believe that angels do not exist, so, the devil also does not exist and of course there is no hell because there are also no demons because God prepared hell for the demons

**C. Challenge**

* This is the challenge that the gospel brings us today, that we strive to endure pains, expend a certain degree of sacrifice in order to reconcile ourselves with those whom we have hurt in order to remain loyal to the teachings or the commandments of the Lord
* So, it is really better to enter into the KOG with one eye or one leg or one arm than to be thrown into Gehenna
* The lives of the saints will all agree that it is better to spend the ordinary pains and sufferings because of the problems that we have in this world than to spend one day of suffering in purgatory
* We are reminded today that our suffering our humiliation of swallowing our pride is nothing compared to the pain of not seeing God forever
* This is the most terrible suffering when God would not allow us to see him in the end
* It pays to follow and to be loyal to the teachings of our Lord especially in reconciling with our neighbors
* There is no victory when nobody asks for forgiveness and there is also no victory when nobody grants forgiveness. Just the same all will suffer
* In the 2nd reading we are warned that we will weep and wail with our miseries if we will not be true to the teachings of our lord especially in reconciliation
* If God will be on our side then who will be against us? In the 1st reading the spirit of the Lord works even with people who do not belong to the group of Moses
* The Spirit works in all religions of the world. The spirit works in whoever it wants to move
* So nobody has the right to take the lives of others simply because one religion is simply inferior
* There will only be joy when we remain loyal to the commandments of the Lord who is the only one and true God