

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Embrace inclusivity in God's mission

Sometimes some of us Christians behave as if we are better people than others. Some of us act as if we have a monopoly on access to God's power. We try to place limitations on God's power and His ability to work in those who are different from us. Our narrow mindedness and exclusive attitude prevent us from recognizing and appreciating the good works that others outside our rank or group perform in God's name.

The first reading and the gospel for this Sunday speak to this fact. Both readings talk about how God's Spirit works through others in unexpected ways. The readings challenge us to overcome the human weakness of pride and jealousy and resist whatever leads us to sin or cause others to stumble in their relationship with God.

In the first reading, God bestowed the charism of prophecy on Eldad and Medad. Both men were outside the camp when God's Spirit rested on the seventy elders who were chosen to assist Moses in his leadership role. Joshua was upset that Eldad and Medad received the Spirit of prophecy from God. He asked Moses to stop them from acting as prophets. Moses challenged Joshua to overcome his weaknesses of envy, jealousy, narrow mindedness, and exclusivity.

In the gospel, the disciples showed a similar attitude by trying to stop a man from casting out demons in Jesus' name. The disciples were surprised that a man who was not part of their fold could act in Jesus' name. One of them named as John reported the incident to Jesus when they returned home.

Jesus rejected the action of his disciples. He said to them, "Whoever is not against us is with us." Like Moses, Jesus teaches us to be tolerant of others and appreciate the good things that different people do in God's name.

He draws our attention to the seriousness of sin. He cautions us against the scandal of evil or causing others to stumble, especially the little or vulnerable ones.

Jesus advises us to take aggressive actions to fight sin in our lives such as controlling our bodily desires and pleasures.

In the second reading, St. James warns us against the dangers of wealth, greed, and exploitation of others. St. James tells us not to use our riches or privileged positions as a means to abuse or defraud, exploit or suppress others. He exhorts us to use our resources to serve the needs and the good of others especially the poor and the marginalized.

The psalmist reminds us of the importance of God's law in our lives. He says that the precepts of the Lord revives our soul and gives wisdom and joy to our heart. With the Psalmist we pray that God's law will continue to be our guide and bring us to show the virtues of love and compassion in our lives. We ask the Lord for the grace to remain open and receptive to the prompting of His Spirit, to recognize and appreciate the good work that others perform in His name.

God bless,

Rev. Dr. Ben