

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

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***God never ceases from doing good
and He never stops anyone from doing good.***

Today's Readings recommend that all of us reflect on our attitude: do we truly accept the good in others, or are we filled with jealousy and envy?

God does not want us to be jealous people. Jealousy is a sin and a spiritual bondage that brings with it anger, noncooperation, exclusion of others, hatred, envy, conflicts, divisions, and the list goes on.

In today's Gospel passage, to illustrate, Mark highlights some concerns that his community will face:

- 1) Ambitious people.
- 2) Envy and being intolerant of others and
- 3) Scandalizing others.

If we remember: last Sunday, we reflected on the Gospel passage about how the disciples of Jesus should be humble, and the importance of being like a servant. Instead, the apostles were ambitious. Each of them considered themselves greater than the other.

Ambition and competition leads to intolerance and scandalising others to bolster oneself. That's what happened with Joshua in the First Reading, and with the disciples of Jesus in the Gospel.

In the Gospel passage, arrogance and envy are exposed when John and other disciples try to exclude a "non-member" from doing ministry in the name of Jesus. Jesus (and the writer, Mark) challenges the disciples to be tolerant and open to others. Anyone who does the will of God belongs to Jesus' family, even though they may not be a member of the community in any declared or formal way.

It is also important that all disciples of Jesus should be good role models to everyone. In this way, the writer, Mark, presents a mixture of challenges to his own disciples, and to anyone who reads this Gospel from back in A.D. 70, and today. His readers must reflect upon the liveliness of their Gospel spirit. They must also root out the evils of ambition, envy, and scandal.

In the First Reading, we see Eldad and Medad prophesy in the camp, although they were not among the seventy elders. The emphasis here is on the absolute sovereignty of God in the attribution of gifts. The Spirit of the Lord blows where it wills, beyond all human logic. God's gifts are not reserved just for those who exercise an official function in the community. All members are able to receive them.

Here is a beautiful story from Anthony De Mello:

Saintly Brother Bruno was praying in the evening, but the croaking of the frogs disturbed his prayer. Not being able to concentrate on his prayer, he went to his window and shouted to frogs to stop their croaking! The response to Brother Bruno's command was instantaneous, and strictly followed not only by the frogs, but by all the surrounding living creatures. There was utter silence. Content, Brother Bruno resumed his prayer again. Then he heard an inner voice say: "Maybe God is as pleased with the croaking of the frogs, as he is with the chanting of your Psalms."

Reflecting on the boundless immensity of God, and questioning the selfishness of his own outburst, Brother Bruno then leaned out of the window and shouted “Sing!”

Immediately, all the frogs started croaking, and all the other creatures joined in and started to sing with them. With that, he continued his prayers; this time with a joyful heart. That sudden realisation transformed Brother Bruno to a new man, whose heart is now harmonious with the universe, and open to being accepting of all creatures.

Let us always keep in mind:

**God never ceases from doing good
and He never stops anyone from doing good.**

Bible Words for Reflection

James 3:14-16

If you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, and devilish. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.