

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time B2021

The readings of this Sunday talk about God's generosity and liberality. They show that God gives, without discrimination, his gifts and talents to anyone he wants. They invite us to be open to others as they build the kingdom of God with their gifts and talents.

The first reading describes the incident that happened when Moses chose seventy elders as his aides. It shows how he took some of his spirit and passed it on to them, according to the instructions received from God. It equally shows the manifestations that followed once they were filled with the spirit.

The text describes also the incident that happened when two people who were not with the elders received the spirit in the same way as they did. After that, the text relates the attempt of Joshua, the second to Moses, to stop them. The text ends up with the reaction of Moses in favor of the two men.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is generous and openhanded. There is also the idea that jealousy and envy jeopardize the growth of the work of God. The last idea is related to the truth that tolerance and acceptance of one another's gifts builds the kingdom of God.

This text helps us understand the point of today's Gospel, as Jesus invites his disciples to tolerance. The Gospel starts with the mention of John reporting the incident of someone casting out demons in the name of Jesus, without being part of the group of the twelve. Then, it gives the reaction of Jesus who forbade them to prevent such a one.

After that, it gives the reason why they should not prevent him from doing his job, as well as it speaks of the reward reserved to those who are generous. The Gospel ends with Jesus' warning about the danger of driving others to sin.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today, I want to talk about tolerance. When Jesus ordered his disciples not to stop the one who was not part of their group, but still casted out the demons in his name, he was inviting them to tolerance and the acceptance of the others.

As it was in the time of Jesus, so is it today. This point remains very crucial for our relationship with one another. As human experience has taught us, there exists in each one of us an innate instinct to prudence and caution. Such caution and prudence are certainly normal, because they can help us avoid being victims of naivety and credulity.

However, over-prudence or over-caution can lead to exclusion, discrimination and even the rejection of others. Why? Well, the configuration of our society makes it easy that we can always find reasons for not teaming with people. That could be the case when people do not belong to our circle of life, or are not like us, or do not share our ideas and vision of things.

That is why the invitation of Jesus to his disciples, to not stop the one casting the demons in his name, is very important to us. It means that Jesus wants to tell the disciples that God, in his generosity, can give his gift to anyone independently of the group to which he belongs. Moreover, the man who was exorcising, whatever might be his motivation, had at least done a deed of mercy for the possessed person and had stood against Satan in doing so. Therefore, he is not against him.

That being the case, the disciples have to be tolerant and acceptable of others even if they do not belong to them. In the same way, we have to be tolerant and accept those who do not share the same ideas with us, especially when it is about our convictions of faith.

Sadly, “tolerance” in nowadays suffers seriously. This simple word “tolerance” makes some people boil with anger and ask the question of why they should accept those who do not share their convictions of faith. They wonder if accepting the existence of other denominations or Christian churches is not the work of the Devil. As I heard many times, with such people, it is not difficult to hold that the Second Vatican Council that promoted ecumenism is the work of Satan.

But here is my question: who is bigger or divine than Jesus himself who teaches us tolerance? Moreover, by saying all this, does it mean that we promote relativism? No; on the contrary, we show our realism by recognizing that God has created the world in such a way that we are differently and diversely gifted. Should anyone, then, hold a view different from ours, it does not mean a priori that he is against us. As far as people proclaim Jesus crucified and risen from the dead; as far as they do not deny his divinity or teach heresies, they are with us.

If doing good to someone in the name of Jesus, like in the case of giving a cup of water, means teaming with Jesus, how much more would preventing someone to come to Jesus or to eternal salvation would seriously be punishable. That is the reason why Jesus insists that if one of our members brings us to sin, it is better to cut it off and enter the kingdom of God amputated.

Are not those words hard to hear? And yet, they come from the mouth of our Lord Jesus. The point Jesus makes is to remind us that if sin is a bad thing, then, to teach others to sin is worse. Therefore, it is our duty to avoid anything that can bring our fellows into sin. We bear a serious responsibility with regard to the salvation or the perdition of our fellows. We have to pay attention to what we say and do so that it might not be an occasion for sin. That is the grace we have to ask in this celebration of the Holy Mass. May God bless you all!

Numbers 11: 25-29; James 5: 1-6; Mark 9: 38-43, 45, 47-48



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