

Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time – September 30, 2018

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

First Reading: NM 11:25-29

The LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses. Taking some of the spirit that was on Moses, the LORD bestowed it on the seventy elders; and as the spirit came to rest on them, they prophesied.

Now two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad, were not in the gathering but had been left in the camp. They too had been on the list, but had not gone out to the tent; yet the spirit came to rest on them also, and they prophesied in the camp. So, when a young man quickly told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp," Joshua, son of Nun, who from his youth had been Moses' aide, said, "Moses, my lord, stop them." But Moses answered him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the people of the LORD were prophets! Would that the LORD might bestow his spirit on them all!"

Responsorial Psalm: PS 19:8, 10, 12-13, 14

R. (9a) The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.

The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul; the decree of the LORD is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple.

R. The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are true, all of them just.

R. The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.

Though your servant is careful of them, very diligent in keeping them, yet who can detect failings? Cleanse me from my unknown faults!

R. The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.

From wanton sin especially, restrain your servant; let it not rule over me. Then shall I be blameless and innocent of serious sin.

R. The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.

Second Reading: JAS 5: 1-6

Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries. Your wealth has rotted away, your clothes have become moth-eaten, your gold and silver have corroded, and that corrosion will be a testimony against you; it will devour your flesh like a fire.

You have stored up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure; you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter. You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous one; he offers you no resistance.

Gospel: MK 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

At that time, John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us." Jesus replied, "Do not prevent him. There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me. For whoever is not against us is for us. Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward.

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life crippled than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna, where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'"

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

In the May 2005 issue of Christianity Today magazine was an article about how Pope John Paul II assisted the cooperative evangelization efforts of a Polish Catholic youth ministry named Oasis, and Campus Crusade for Christ which is a Protestant evangelical organization. The article reveals several ways in which the then Cardinal and later Pope extended arms of friendship and grace to several, clearly evangelical, Protestants in a desire to work together to bring Christ to Catholics in Poland and Italy. Two things are interesting about the article. One is the undertone of amazement that a Catholic would assist evangelicals. The other is the skepticism that he could clearly be ranked as an evangelical: “Was Pope John Paul II an evangelical? In the current usage and meaning of the word, many would say of course not. But many American evangelicals saw in Wojtyla a man devoted to a biblical faith in Christ and committed to proclaiming the gospel to an increasingly lost secular world. He shared the core values of American evangelicalism: Christocentrism, Biblicism, evangelism, and anti-secularism.”¹ Dah!, as the kids would say. If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck — it’s a duck. I know of no other man who could more honestly be declared evangelical than our beloved Holy Father, Saint Pope John Paul II.

His behavior in advancing the cause of Christ by encouraging Catholics and evangelicals to work together is consistent with Christ, consistent with his life and values, and consistent with the Church’s teachings. “The Council has stated: ‘Catholics must joyfully acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments from our common heritage which are to be found among our separated brothers and sisters. It is right and salutary to recognize the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood. For God is always wonderful in his works and worthy of admiration,’”².

Pope John Paul II, Popes Benedict XVI, and Francis I, along with their predecessors John XXIII, and Paul VI, have brought a new depth of understanding and spirituality to how we should relate to non-Catholic Christians. In this respect they have provided a wonderful service to the cause of Christ, not only within Catholicism but throughout Christendom. They have fully captured the heart of Jesus’ mission and methodology for reaching the world: namely, that Christians’ unity and love for one another should be a light and beacon of hope to a dark and divided world. (John 13:34,35)

We see this attitude reflected in both this week’s First Reading and the Gospel Reading. We wonder how Christendom could have missed and ignored for so long; Jesus’ desire for unity and love among his followers, it is beyond comprehension. That is, it is beyond our comprehension until we reflect on our own feelings of rivalry, competition and party spirit toward other Christian groups, parishes, and denominations. In our human understanding, to be for something, necessarily means to be against some other thing. This should not be so. In Jesus’ heart and mind, as we see in the Gospel Reading, to be for something means to be for it in whatever various forms it appears. Consequently, Jesus rejects his disciples call for partisanship, and does not forbid others who willingly bear his name, from doing so just because they were not part of his specific band of disciples. Jesus’ concern is not partisanship but the spread of the Good News to a corrupt and hopeless world.

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Today the world is increasing in moral decay and hopelessness. To sit around arguing about who is the greatest, and expending our energies to put down those who do not totally agree with us in every detail, while ignoring their unity with us regarding Jesus' divinity, salvation, and mission, is to lose sight of both reality, and Jesus' objective. Today more than ever we must unite to know, honor, and glorify the Savior, to bring his saving truth to a lost world. "In the eyes of the world, cooperation among Christians becomes a form of common Christian witness and a means of evangelization which benefits all involved."³ Only those who choose to remain out of the spiritual battle for the hearts of the world can enjoy the luxury of expending their energies on intra-Christian squabbling.

1 Christianity Today article: "The Pope We Never Knew," by David Scott.

2 Ut Unum Sint, by Pope John Paul II, (47).

3 Ut Unum Sint, by Pope John Paul II, (40).

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

First Reading

1. Contrast the attitudes of Joshua and Moses

Second Reading

2. How should we relate to the spiritual success of other Christians?
3. What is the root cause of jealousy, selfishness and greed?

Gospel Reading

4. Why were the disciples opposed to the man who was casting out demons?
5. Compare the disciples' attitude toward this other person who was casting out demons, with the Pharisees attitude toward Jesus' casting out demons.
6. What does Jesus teach regarding our attitude toward others who serve him?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.