

Homily. 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. B. 28/29 September 2024.

I'm not going to spend much time on the cutting, chopping and tearing part of this gospel. It's clearly hyperbole, strong, exaggerated language being used to make an important point; and the point is that it's very bad indeed if we become an obstacle between God and anyone's faith. The main message Jesus is trying so hard to get into his disciples heads, and into ours, is that jealousy doesn't serve God's will and that God works in ways bigger than our minds and wider than our hearts can grasp.

John the disciple, likely speaking out what some other disciples thought and felt, is anxious to keep the healing and helping power of Jesus exclusive to his himself and their select group. Jesus, on the other hand, has no such issues about exclusivity. Like a modern day Moses, he's happy that God's Spirit is at work in people anywhere and everywhere God so chooses.

You see, Jesus is completely focused on God and God's message and goodness, not the messenger. As Jesus puts it; Anyone using my name for good is unlikely to then speak badly of me, for as he tells John anyone who is not against us is working for us. This is freedom, freedom from our fearful self-interested egos, freedom to rejoice in God's power and action.

As it shifts our focus away from the messenger and onto Jesus and the action of the Holy Spirit this has a number of practical applications. Think of believers in other Christian's churches and the good that they're doing, God at work; of organisations other than our own that are seeking justice, peace and a better world, God active in people's hearts and minds; of

persons of good will trying their best to uphold social stability, bring kindness and help to others, again God present and active even if not being publicly unacknowledged.

Part of our role is to recognise this good work, supporting and celebrating the living breath and breadth of the Spirit moving in our world. We're able name much of this sacrifice and service as the wide and wonderful embrace of God's love, signs of the Jesus alive in our times. Yes, what we do in the world matters, as too does what so many others do. Here, as we give thanks always and everywhere to the Lord our God, we bring to this altar of the Lord the goodness and service of all who proclaim and live the Good News. This is because we remember Jesus who tells us that anyone who gives even a cup of water to those working for Christ mission will most certainly not loose their reward from God.