

Homily. 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. B. 25/26 September 2021.

Our first reading and the first half of the gospel tell us of people that some wanted excluded, but that Moses and Jesus did not.

Eldad and Medad weren't at the tent of meeting when God came down and took some of the Spirit that was on Moses, sharing it with the 70 elders. These elders were to be helpers of Moses as he steered the people through the deserts, towards the Promised Land. Though outside the place of meeting, these two received a share in the Spirit and began to speak in God's name. Joshua, who was Moses 2IC, wanted them silenced, but Moses did not. He said that he wished God might give God's Spirit to all of the people so that they all could speak God's words.

Similarly, and simply because he wasn't one of the disciples group, John had tried to stop a man who was freeing people from bad spirits in the name of Jesus. Like Moses before Him, Jesus insisted that this man be left alone; not stopped; or cut out. As Jesus said, there is no one who performs good in His name that is likely to ever speak ill of Him, adding that those who aren't against us, are for us.

This pattern of excluding and including, of deciding who's out and who's in is as old as humanity itself. You know that we've all been caught up in this cycle at one time and another. Our reasons for making these sort of distinctions are the age old ones of race, colour or creed, wealth, power and status, moral probity or public shame, having some desired abilities, talents and looks or lacking thereof.

With great consistency, Jesus rejected this typecasting. He welcomed, embraced and included sinners, the sick and outcast, the quick and slow, women and those publicly shamed, as well as people who weren't Jewish; eventually even pagans and those of no religion at all. As His mission and ministry evolved. He threw out the welcome mat ever wider because He represented God's mercy that knows no bounds, God's love being unconditional and all-embracing as Christ's Cross testifies.

Right now, our call is to try to do and to be the same as Christ; to welcome and accept all who really want to belong with us. This isn't the same as bland tolerance of the 'anything and anyone goes' variety. People do need a genuine desire and the right disposition when they seek to join us. Further to this, their desire needs discerning, even formation in Christian values and the gospel way. Our Parish Baptism and Sacramental preparation efforts, our RCIA and adult faith formation initiatives, membership in our many groups and participation in our worship and service to others are a few examples of the ways we can include, support and help to develop in people, their desire to belong. Above all else, no one is to ever be excluded on any grounds, except those of insincerity and their own lifestyle values and free choices.

We experience God's inclusion and embrace every time we gather, and with faith come to the Lord's Table. Gradually, in His Spirit and wisdom so generously shared with us, the way of the Lord becomes our way of living too, the pattern of Christ that welcomes as sisters and brothers, all who want to learn how to joyfully live within the precepts of the Lord.