



Christ in Our Neighborhood

Prayer

Father, we believe that Jesus Christ is Your Only Begotten Son and, through Him, we have eternal life. By the power of the Holy Spirit, who makes Christ known, may we always abide in Your love and find our place with You in heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Numbers 11:25-29

We have been reflecting over the course of these 6 weeks on our theme: “Who Am I?”

We recall from last week’s readings that “jealousy and self-ambition” do not reflect our true nature and identity as Christians. If we are to answer the question, “Who am I,” we must remove any part of us that seeks to be something that we are not.

Our First Reading addresses this very point. When Joshua witnesses Eldad and Medad prophesying — though they weren’t at the ritual where the spirit was dispensed — he wants Moses to stop them. Moses rebukes Joshua with, “Are you jealous for my sake?”

The spirit, resting on Moses, the elders, and Eldad and Medad, was not to give them a self-ambitious boost in authority. The ancient practice of setting some people apart for leadership was not to be confused with setting them above others. Seeking ambition or being jealous of other’s gifts was not to be tolerated.

Question

Have you ever wanted to be better than another?

Have you ever been jealous of others who “appeared” to be better than you?

Commentary

2nd Reading: James 5:1-6

There is nothing wrong with being wealthy. How we handle wealth may be right or wrong. It may be that God has set some apart — not above — with the mission to build businesses in order to provide jobs for others, to stimulate the economy of towns or states, and to be generous to the poor.

The Letter of Saint James is a warning to those who use their God-given abilities for self-ambition. Forgetting that they are set apart, the rich in James’ letter are those who have set themselves above and have forgotten the needs of their own workers.

In the Old Testament, to take away a worker’s just wages is to murder him (See Sirach 34:22).

Forgetting that their wealth came from God in order to lead the people rightly and justly, the rich in James’s letter are given a warning. The cries of the poor, at their own hands, “have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.”

Question

Consider the gifts God has given you. Do you use them justly?

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Commentary

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

Our Gospel has an obvious connection to the First Reading. Just as Moses chastises Joshua for being jealous of those who had received a portion of his spirit, the Lord rebukes His disciples who are concerned about those who are driving out demons in Jesus' name.

Jesus is quick to teach His disciples that "whoever is not against us is with us." This presumes that those who are against the Lord are "not with us."

Who is not among Jesus' company? Returning to the Letter of James, clearly the ones who have set themselves above rather than being set apart to accompany the mission of Christ and His Church are those to be avoided. Those who stand against and above the poor and the just are to be "cut off." Whereas, those who are performing mighty deeds in Jesus' name are with the Lord and His Church.

Question

As we consider the theme, "Who Am I?," it is best to answer this question with two other questions: Who am I in Jesus' company? Who am I apart from Jesus?

This Week's Task

Mother Teresa once said, "When a poor person dies of hunger, it has not happened because God did not take care of him or her. It has happened because neither you nor I wanted to give that person what he or she needed."

List three items that you can give to the poor:

Prayer

The group prays these words of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta:

A sacrifice to be real must cost,
must hurt,
must empty ourselves.

The fruit of silence is prayer,
the fruit of prayer is faith,
the fruit of faith is love,
the fruit of love is service,
the fruit of service is peace.

The prayer continues with Psalm 19

Psalm

Response: 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.

Conclude with an Our Father