

26th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – B; Sept. 29th 2024
Numbers 11: 25-29; James 5: 1-6; Mark 9: 38-43, 45, 47-48

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

The evils of jealousy, intolerance, and hatred are as old as Adam and Eve. Out of jealousy and hatred Cain killed the innocent Abel. Sarah was jealous over Hagar, the slave girl who became the mother of Abraham's son. Moved with jealousy Sarah forced Abraham to drive out Hagar from the house and Abraham had to do yield. Aaron and Miriam, the brother and sister of Moses became jealous over the divine power of Moses and they started grumbling against their brother. Though, young David saved Israel from the attack of Philistines by killing Goliath, Saul, the king, became jealous over the popularity of David. He did everything to destroy David. But his vengeance and jealousy paved the way for his tragic end.

In today's first reading we have just heard how intolerant and Jealous Joshua became over the two elders. While God was conferring the Spirit to 72 elders, two became absent and didn't come out of their tent. But God was generous to bestow His Spirit upon them too and, they started prophesying with others. Joshua could not appreciate that. He wanted Moses to stop them. But Moses corrects Joshua that God is generous and He can do a favor for anyone whom He chooses.

In today's gospel we see two different themes running and we will reflect over the first theme which is over the jealousy of John. As we heard, we meet a man casting out demons in the name of Jesus and this is the only incident of this nature. The disciples could not appreciate and tolerate this act because he refused to join their group. Perhaps they were jealous over that man's power of healing which they didn't have initially. So naturally, they could not tolerate this guy, who was not even a disciple of Jesus but could cast out demons in Jesus' name. It was a little too much for the disciples and they were burning with jealousy and rivalry. Humanly speaking none of the apostles had any qualification or quality to become the disciple of Jesus at all. But still Jesus chose and elevated them. As we read in the gospels, now and then their jealousy, rivalry, greed and intolerance came out in the open. It seemed that they wanted to monopolize the healing power of Jesus for themselves.

As we read in the Church history, we know how much damage was done to the Church due to the attitude of intolerance and jealousy kept by some Church authorities and members. In good olden times the Church kept a court of Inquisition to try the heretics and they were very severely punished. The Church officials were very intolerant to Martin Luther who thought differently, though in many things he was right. As a

result the Church was divided. There was a time the Catholics condemned the Protestants to hell and vice versa. Very often we see intolerance and jealousy creeping into the communities. When some members start comparing themselves with others, they feel that they don't have the qualities and talents others have. They start burning with jealousy and that turns into intolerance. But out of their jealousy they totally miss to see the many good things they are blessed with.

Each person is created differently and blessed with different talents and gifts. *What you have, I may not have and vice versa. But when both our talents and gifts mingled together, something great and different will come out and that will help the community to grow.* For the growth of the community we need people with different gifts; we need people who think differently; we need members with different ideas. Mother Theresa says, **“I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things.”**

Very often my problem is that I never see what I have; but often think about what you have and then compare my gifts with of yours. As a result I see that many things you enjoy which I don't have. Soon I become upset and jealous over you. I may feel that God was not fair with me. Instead, to overcome jealousy and be happy, there is a simple way. First of all, be content with what you have and don't even think what others have; don't even bother your mind with thinking what you could have had. God has given you enough to make your life happy. **Bill Cox, the motivational speaker says, “Focus on what you have instead of what you don't have; on what is right in your world instead of what is wrong; on where you are going instead of what you have been through.”** Then there is no room for jealousy, rivalry and intolerance.