

26th Ordinary Sunday
September 26th, 2021
“Ending Polarization”

Num 11:25-29

Jas 5:1-6

Mk 9:38-48

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

It’s truly a tragedy that so many Americans are polarized. It’s really sad that so many today cannot disagree without being disagreeable. This is most obvious in the political sphere – and in the area of Covid vaccinations.

What most on the extreme sides of these issues don’t realize is that other people have good and sensible reasons for their particular viewpoint and stand.

Problems arise when we are unwilling to enter a discussion that is polite and calm – And this can be in any area and about any issue. To enter such a discussion, we must, temporarily, put aside our own opinion or viewpoint. We must truly open ourselves to what the other person is saying. Because only after openly listening to the other person can we expect them to listen to us and to our own point of view.

Unfortunately, when we don’t listen to others, we often alienate them. Moreover, in our defensiveness we can ridicule them and call them names. We can even judge them, condemn them, and ostracize them from our circle of associates.

The scriptures for today have much to say about being open to the other side of a potential conflict we might face. Moses was overwhelmed with all the conflicts and disagreements the multitude of the Chosen People brought for him to settle. So he chose 72 others to help him. However, when God’s Spirit came upon the group as they waited and prayed, Eldad and Medad were missing. Yet, these two men still received the same Spirit. They were blessed by God as were the 70 others.

Joshua became concerned and told Moses to stop them. In his humility, Moses told Joshua never to restrict how God works. The absent men were truly doing what God wanted. Indeed, it would be wonderful if all the people could be blessed in the same way!

We see a similar scenario in the Gospel of St. Mark. Someone, whom the disciples did not know, was driving out demons in the name of Jesus. “This could not be right!” “He was not part of their special group!”

So, Jesus teaches them that God works in His own ways. The man was doing good – He was doing good in the name of Jesus. Therefore, he must be allowed to continue his ministry. Furthermore, anyone who does anything good for others in the name of Jesus, would not not lose their reward!

Then, Jesus tells them how tragic it is whenever we do harm to others and to their souls. In fact, those who cause others to sin will be severely and inescapably punished. Furthermore, we must cut ourselves off from anything that causes us to sin – These things might be material, situational, and even certain people themselves. In any case, they are occasions of sin which can destroy our soul – and they must be cleanly severed!

Surprisingly, what most people fail to realize is that, in many cases, these sources of sin are the thoughts and attitudes we have in our own mind and hearts. They can even be the very behaviors that cause us to become polarized. Our personal misguided, misinformed, mistaken minds and hearts can lead us to hurt others. Thus, we judge them, condemn them, ridicule them, exclude them – and even ostracize them. We do this easily whenever we fail to stand in their shoes and walk a mile with them as we listen to them! These are truly the sins of the eyes, the hands, and the feet of our minds and hearts that need to be separated from us!

Brothers and Sisters, there is always more we can do if we are to become a better child of God. Every one of us needs to take time each day to examine our hearts, our minds, our motives and our behavior. We must honestly admit where we failed and where we need to do better. What are the things that keep us from really living the Gospel? What can we do with God’s gifts and blessings that will benefit others and make life easier for them?

May the Holy Spirit come upon us.

May the Holy Spirit help us to discern what God is asking of us.

And may God’s grace enable us to do and become all that God asks of us!

Amen.

September 26, 2021

Msgr. Russell G. Terra