

2021 September 26

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings:

First: Numbers 11.25-29, "When the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied." (25c)

The Psalm: 19, "The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever." (9a)

Second: James 5.1-6, "Your gold and silver have rusted." (3a)

The Gospel: Mark 9.38-48, "Whoever is not against us is for us." (40)

Monopoly mongers

Joshua and John in today's readings want to reserve the Spirit of God just for a few, the chosen ones! Moses and Jesus remind them that the Spirit is a free gift and God can give the Spirit to anyone of his choice, and that no one from outside can dispossess any one of the true Spirit. Moses realized through God's intervention in his life that the gifts of the Spirit given to him by God were not for himself alone, but for the sake of others and must be distributed to and dispensed for others. That is the design for everyone when God imbues one with the gifts and fruits of the Spirit. Moses also teaches his followers and us that when we see God's Spirit working in anyone we must rejoice, praise and thank God for its pouring out. This response to God will bring added graces into our life and work and that of others.

While Jesus and Moses refer to the spiritual gifts given to humans, James refers today to the material goods given to them, and how they must do business with them for good and for bad. These goods given to people, according James, are not to be stored for future nor for one's own enjoyment, not to oppress the less advantaged of this world like the poor, the laborers, the marginalized, etc., nor for luxurious spending and living for self-gratification alone. He warns that such behavior will result in severe punishment and condemnation by the giver of these gifts, God the Almighty.

Jesus compliments those who care for his workers and those in his mission. Not even the smallest of favor shown to them will be unnoticed. He gives us severe warnings against giving scandal to others, and our own body becoming cause of temptation for ourselves and others, leading to sin. Scandals and temptations must be kept in control, if not, there would be consequences. Jesus tells us a practical truth, namely, there are consequences for all our actions and inaction, good as well as bad. Scandals and temptations go together. The scandal one gives may lead someone else to temptation. One who causes others to be tempted is inviting that one to sin. Both giving temptation and falling into temptation are sins and each one must ward oneself against such happenings.

Sometimes what one calls as personal freedom, style of life, behaviour, attire, etc., may lead someone else to temptation and sin. Jesus warns against such behaviour. St. Paul says that there is nothing wrong in eating meat offered to idols; however, if such eating gives scandal to a believer, one must desist from eating such food in the presence of such delicate souls. (1 Corinthians 8.7-13). Thus, freedom, scandal, and temptation have different dimensions depending on the context wherein and the persons who are involved. While we have every right to enjoy our freedom we do not have any right to infringe upon the freedom of others, and our actions or freedom must not lead others to temptation.

Fr. George