

26th Sunday (B)

- E.B. White, the author of children's classics such as "Charlotte's Web" & "Stuart Little" apparently said that *"Prejudice is a great time saver. You can form opinions without having to get the facts."*
- The readings of today's Mass focus on prejudice & who suffers because of it.
- The First Reading is set in the context of Moses selecting seventy elders to take over some of his responsibilities of governing the people during their journey through the wilderness.
- The Spirit of God comes down on the seventy elders and it is here that prejudice raises its ugly head – it is discovered that the Spirit has also come down upon two men in the camp.
- When Joshua hears of it, he insists that Moses put a stop to it because the two men concerned were not among the seventy officially chosen and they had not been part of the 'elect' in the tent.
- The response of Moses is quite wonderful, and surely we are to learn from it: *'If only all the people were prophets and God would pour out his Spirit on them all!'*
- Moses knows something of the universal love of God.
- He is not about limiting God's power or maintaining an elite clique.
- The whole world is God's - would it not be wonderful if everyone were filled with God's Spirit and spoke God's word.
- In the Gospel John tries to get Jesus to stop a man who is calling on the name of Jesus to bring healing and liberation to people.
- John wants him stopped because, as he says: 'he is not one of us'.
- Jesus response is immediate: 'Do not stop him!'
- Like Moses, Jesus is not interested in defending the rights and privileges of a specially chosen group.
- Rather, he is delighted that people are finding healing and freedom.
- In spite of the efforts of Jesus to teach his disciples to live like him in the service of God's kingdom, God's project for humanity and all created order, God's values, making people's lives more humane, more dignified & happy, they fail to understand the Spirit that animates him, his great love for the most needy, & the deepest purpose of his life.
- The disciples have no concern for people's health & safety, but only for the reputation of the group – they want to have a monopoly on the liberation that Jesus brings oppressed people.
- Jesus reproaches them for the stance they had taken & shows how radically different he is from the way they think.
- He takes a different stand – the first & most important thing is not the growth & prestige of this small group, but that God's grace should reach every human being, even through people who don't belong to the group.

- Whoever uses the healing & liberating power of God, of Jesus, in the world is actively working for his project.
- Jesus rejects the sectarian & exclusive policy of his disciples, who think only of their own growth & prestige, & adopts an open & inclusive attitude in which the important thing is to free people from what dehumanizes them. This is the spirit that must always animate his true disciples.
- There are countless men & women outside the Catholic Church who do good things & work for people so that they live a more dignified, just & free life - The Spirit of Jesus lives in them, & we need to consider them as friends & fellow workers, never as enemies.
- They are not against us, but for the human person as Jesus was.
- We have looked back at the earth from space and have seen it as a beautiful planet; It has been dramatically demonstrated that we do, indeed, belong to each other. We need each other.
- In the survey that ACU carried out on 5,000 young Australians, the first point they made is: "Be a more merciful/compassionate community, and advocate strongly for the poor" – the young are more attuned to the authenticity & the integrity of the Church, & recognize other groups doing what we should be doing.
- In the 2nd part of the Gospel, Mark presents a clear challenge by asking what is within our own community that causes us to sin.
- What are the ways we as Church operate that we have allowed so many children, young people, single mothers, mentally ill citizens to be without shelter in emergencies & home for security.
- He sets up the question whether we are complicit in the sin of destitution & homelessness, & whether we are willing to eradicate what causes us to be involved in that sin.
- We are meant to be a prophetic voice as the disciples of Jesus today, to interrogate the causes of homelessness, & strive together with other bodies for solutions; to remind our society that everyone deserves a place to call home.
- We have just celebrated the feast of Saint Vincent de Paul who lived as a parish priest in Paris in the first half of the seventeenth century.
- Frederick Ozanam, founder of the society of the Vincent de Paul has been beatified. These men understood Jesus' message & would not allow ignorance through prejudice blind them to see who needs to experience the care & compassion of God through human hearts.
- They didn't know as much as we know about the terrible injustices that happen every day on this earth, but they knew better than we, that God's love is everywhere and that God has given a share of Jesus' Spirit to us all, and that we can all make a difference, if we listen for God's inspiration and reach out in love in little ways, starting where we are.