

30th September 2018 (26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

Numbers 11:25-29; Psalm 18(19):8,10,12-14; James 5:1-6; Mark 9:38-43,45,47-48.

Anyone who is not against us is for us.

In today's gospel reading we hear of an interesting incident. The apostles try to stop someone who 'is not one of them' from performing miracles in Jesus' name. Jesus is not impressed with the apostles' attitude and gently rebukes them saying: 'anyone who is not against us, is for us!'

The first reading from the book of Numbers has a similar story. Moses chooses seventy men to share with him in the leadership of the People of God. Two men who had not been chosen also started prophesying. Joshua, a close associate of Moses, goes to report this incident to Moses. Moses' reply is very interesting: 'are you jealous on my account? If only the whole people of the Lord were prophets, and the Lord gave his Spirit to them all!'

Goodness comes in many forms and sizes and in each case it is an image of God who is perfect goodness! In another gospel narrative Jesus invites us to be holy (perfect / good) as God the Father is holy (perfect / good)! That is the invitation to all of humanity created in the image and likeness of God.

As humans we are often tempted to box and categorise people around us. We think we have the right to determine who is good and who is not. *(At times we even go as far as determining who has been saved and who has been denied salvation; who is going to heaven and who is destined to hell!)* In today's gospel reading Jesus gently reminds us that it is not our prerogative to judge those around us, 'no one who works a miracle in my name is likely to speak evil of me!' Because we are baptised in Christ and share in his priestly, prophetic and kingly roles, does not mean that no one else can share in these gifts. As the common saying goes: all roads lead to Rome! It does not really matter which way you take, as long as you end up in God!

In her Vatican Two document *Nostra Aetate* the Church teaches that while we have been given the fullness of the Truth in Christ we have not been given a monopoly on this Truth. The fullness of Truth is still God and he still has the prerogative of showing himself to whomever he wills and chooses. Other religions too have a share of the Truth that is God and we need to respect this reality.

God shows himself in and through the world in many and various ways. God has already sown his presence in the world; he has hidden his good news in the world. Our role as Christians is to recognise God's goodness in the world around us, 'unearth' it, and help it grow into its fullness.

Today we also celebrate social justice Sunday; another reminder of the need to reach out and be the presence of God in the world around us. God works in and through us so that we help the world around us to recognise him. Once as an individual, as a Christian and as part of God's Church I need to ask myself: how do I witness to God to those who most need my help? How do I reach out to be God to all around me? How do I unearth the gospel in the world I inhabit?

If only the whole people of the Lord were prophets, and the Lord gave his Spirit to them all!

Fr Mario