

## 26th Sunday (B)

- Elwyn Brooks 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 as a result.
- 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 & 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 & they had not been part of the 'elect' in the tent.
- The response of Moses is wonderful & generous, & we can learn much from it: *'If only all the people were prophets & God would pour out his Spirit on them all!'*
- Moses knows something of the universal love of God – that it's not limited to those we may think deserve it for one or other reason.
- 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 & 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 & 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 & privileges of a specially chosen group.
- Rather, he is delighted that people are finding healing & 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 & 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 authentically uses the healing & liberating power of God, of Jesus, in the world is actively working for his project – is actually doing God’s will by being God’s instrument.
- 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 selflessly for people, so that they may 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 they are for the human person as Jesus was.
- And an attitude that limits God’s power & knowledge to only bishops & priests without an openness to collaboration with the lay faithful & listening to God’s Spirit speaking through them is challenged by today’s Gospel.
- We have looked back at the earth from space & have seen it as a beautiful planet; It has been dramatically demonstrated that we do, indeed, belong to each other. We need each other & we should work with those who genuinely seek to make this world a better place.
- In the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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, refugees, 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 of exclusion & prejudice.
- 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.
- On Monday we celebrate 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, the 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 & that God has given a share of Jesus’ Spirit to us all, & that we can all make a difference, if we listen for God’s inspiration & reach out in love in little ways, starting where we are.