

Homily
26th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B
26th September 2021

“Anyone who is not against us, is for us”

According to a traditional Hebrew story, Abraham was sitting outside his tent one evening when he saw an old man, weary from age and journey, coming toward him. Abraham rushed out, greeted him, and then invited him into his tent. There he washed the old man’s feet and offered him food and drink. The old man immediately began eating without even saying any prayer or blessing. Abraham was upset and so Abraham asked him, “Don’t you worship God?” The old traveler replied, “I worship only fire and reverence no other god.” When Abraham heard this, he became incensed, grabbed the old man by the shoulders, and threw him out of his tent into the cold night air. When the old man had departed, God called to his friend Abraham and asked where the stranger was. Abraham replied, “I forced him out because he did not worship You.”

Upon hearing this, God said, “Abraham, Abraham, I have suffered him these eighty years although he dishonors me. And I have been supplying him with food every day for the past eighty years. And now, could you

not have tolerated him for just one meal? Could you not endure him just one night?”

In today's Gospel, we find intolerance among the apostles of Christ. The apostles wanted to reserve God's love and healing power to themselves as the 'sole owners' and 'authorized distributors'! We hear John complaining to Jesus that a stranger was driving out demons in Jesus' name, though he was not of their company. They want Jesus to condemn the man.

But how does Jesus respond to their grievances? Jesus was very calm, cool, serene and firm in his response. He takes it as a chance to teach them that God's ways are different from man's ways. Jesus in fact reprimands his disciples for their jealousy and suspicion and He invites them to broaden their vision and to recognize God's power wherever it is found. And so, He tells them: “Anyone who is not against us, is for us”. Obviously, God's perspective on things can be much broader than our perspective. And, He wants the apostles to rejoice in the good that others are doing, for God is the Doer of all good.

Well, the invitation to proclaim the good news of salvation, in both word and deed, is not restricted to the twelve apostles or the seventy disciples but extended to anyone who will hear and respond to it “in Jesus’

name.” And we need to remember that the work of the Kingdom is not confined to the baptized, although it is certainly our special mission. And therefore, wherever we see God's work being done, we should be able to give it our support and be ready to join hands with those doing the work, whether they are Christians or not, believers or not.

There is an interesting story in the book *'Tales of the Hasidim'*. One day, an American tourist paid a visit to Rabbi Chaim. And the tourist was astonished at the sparseness of his furnishings as the Rabbi's home was only a simple room filled with books, plus a table and a bench. “Rabbi”, asked the tourist, “where is your furniture?”. Having heard his question, the Rabbi retorted: “Well! Where is yours?” “Mine?” the puzzled American continued, “but, I'll be here only for a while; I am just passing through.”. “So am I,” said the Rabbi.

Dear friends, we are all mere pilgrims on this earth. And we are all ordinary workers and not master builders, ministers and not Messiahs. And I feel our prayer should be: “God of my life, create in me the heart of a pilgrim”.

Albert Schweitzer, one of the most significant personalities of the 20th century who became a doctor of medicine following his vow to serve those in need, to

serve the poorest of the poor used to often say: “ I have always held firmly to the thought that each of us can do something to bring to an end some portion of the world’s misery...And I have become convinced that the only ones among us who will be really happy are those who have sought and found a way to serve”.

Well, dear brothers and sisters, let us pay heed to the invitation of the Lord as given to us in the Gospel of today that we ought to respect the gifts and charisms of all those who work in Jesus’ name. And may we have that awareness that we are only His workers, His Ministers and that, we are all pilgrims trying to reach God ‘our King and Master’. And let me conclude quoting Pope Francis: "What instructions does the Lord give us for going forth to others? Only one, and it's very simple: Make disciples. But, be careful: His disciples, and not our own,"

God bless you all! **Amen.**