

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B – 9/29/2024

– Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen

- **First Reading – Numbers 11:25-29:** The LORD bestowed Moses’ spirit on seventy elders, including Eldad and Mead who prophesied in the camp, leading Moses to wish all people were prophets.
- **Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 19:** God’s law revives the soul and gives wisdom; His judgments are true and fair. I seek forgiveness for unknown faults and pray to be kept from deliberate sins.
- **Second Reading – James 5:1-6:** The rich are admonished for hoarding wealth and exploiting workers; their luxury and injustice will lead to their downfall.
- **Gospel – Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48:** Jesus instructed his disciples not to hinder someone casting out demons in his name, affirming those not against them are allies. He stressed the gravity of causing believers to sin, using strong metaphors to emphasize the importance of avoiding sin and its severe consequences, even if it requires personal sacrifice.

“Are you jealous for my sake?” We can almost hear Moses saying this to his followers in the Book of Numbers. He is frustrated because his followers are clearly thinking about themselves and their positions and not about the Word of God which anyone can receive and proclaim. The Gospel of Mark echoes this advice: “There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me.” And we who follow Jesus as Lord must also become aware that God acts all around us and in His own way—and we are still called to be faithful.

The Book of Numbers shows the followers of Moses, in reality the followers of God, becoming irritated because others who were not chosen as Prophets began to prophesy. Moses immediately realizes that it is from God, but his followers are not so quick to catch on. Just as in our Church we often have ways of thinking that exclude God from acting in certain ways—and we must always struggle against that. Jesus comes to save the whole world. So, the question is often asked: “Well, then, why have a Church?”

The second reading today is from the Letter of James. The teaching is that we are invited to follow God in all things and not strive to amass wealth or fame or other things in this life. Nothing will count in the end except faithfulness to the Lord God. Yet in so many ways we all try to find a way to justify ourselves. We always want something better. We always want to look good in comparison with others. We always want to be able to have enough and more than enough. None of that will bring us into the presence of God. The Prophets and all of Scripture keep telling us: take up your cross and follow me! Moses would respond to this reading again: How I wish that all would follow the Lord! How I wish that all were prophets!

The Gospel of Mark today gives us two clear teachings. The first is the same at the Book of Numbers: *Never try to stop the works of God that happen around you because they don't fit the way you think that they should happen!*

The second teaching is clear: *whatever we do to help others is from God and whatever we do to cause others to sin will be brought before us at the time of judgment.*

Today many no longer think of the final judgment and many prefer to think that there is no hell. Yet the teachings of our Church and of Jesus Himself speak of judgment and of hell. They are not the focus of the teachings of Jesus. Rather they form a backdrop. Jesus really calls us to want all people to follow Him and for all people to seek good and to struggle against sin and evil. This struggle takes place, however, in our freedom. And in our freedom, we can choose against God.

So, this Sunday let us pray that all might be prophets, that all might struggle against sin and against harming anyone. Let us give thanks for all who do good and pray that we also may do good.