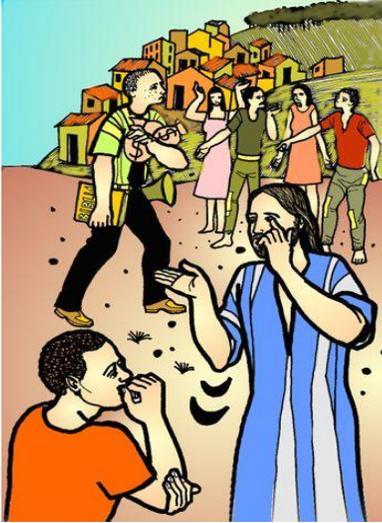


Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community

26<sup>TH</sup>. ORDINARY SUNDAY

Cycle B - September 26, 202



OPENING PRAYER

Leader: The ordinances of the Lord rejoice the heart

All: The law of the Lord is perfect and rest of the soul.

Leader: The precept of the Lord is faithful and instructs the ignorant.

All: Keep your servant from arrogance, so that he does not dominate me:  
In this way I will be freed from great sin.

Leader: *We invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit:*

**Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth.**

**Oh God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy his consolations, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

FIRST READING [ Numbers 11 (25-29) ]

***The Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses. Taking some of the spirit that was on Moses, the Lord bestowed it on the seventy elders; and as the spirit came to rest on them, they prophesied.***

***Now two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad, were not in the gathering but had been left in the camp. They too had been on the list, but had not gone out to the tent; yet the spirit came to rest on them also, and they prophesied in the camp.***

***So, when a young man quickly told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp," Joshua, son of Nun, who from his youth had been Moses' aide, said, "Moses, my lord, stop them."***

***But Moses answered him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets! Would that the Lord might bestow his spirit on them all!"***

In the group of the first five books of the Bible (Pentateuch) is this book, with a curious title: Numbers. When the Israelite made a pilgrimage through the desert, after having left slavery in Egypt, there came a time when Moses took a census to find out how many there were. This book begins with those "numbers" and that's where his name came from. But the book is not limited to statistics because it would be a bit boring, and it would not transmit divine Revelation to us. This book has been preserved because it also contains other teachings, such as the text of this reading.

The people had complained (how many times they did!) to Moses, and he presented his case to Yahweh. He finds it too much of the burden on his shoulders to answer for such a large people. Moses, as we can read, chooses 70 men among the most experienced of the people ("elders" not necessarily elderly people) and goes with them to the Tent of Meeting, which was outside the camp and was where the Lord manifested. In a cloud. The spirit will no longer to be had only by Moses, but by those who would be responsible for helping him in his mission of leading the people.

In the Old Testament we do not find God-Holy Spirit as a person, but as a force that seizes man and transforms him. But it fulfills very specific and specific functions, and that is why it does not remain in those fully and forever. In the Old Testament the Spirit was received by a few and temporarily. It will be after the Resurrection of Christ that the Holy Spirit is "democratized" and every baptized believer fully enjoys his presence. In the New Testament the Spirit will habitually rest on all believing people. Then Moses' wishes are fulfilled in the face of Joshua's jealousy: I wish the people would receive the Spirit!

Today, with so much talk about charisms and prophetism, it is worth remembering that the prophet is not a visionary of the future, but someone through whom God communicates his message. And to make sure that the message is from God and not from man, the Holy Spirit takes care to produce the necessary inspiration. In this way, when a baptized person acts in his capacity as a prophet, animated by the Holy Spirit, He makes others experience the passage of God. That is the mission of the baptized Christian.

- (1) What feeling moved Joshua? Envy? Jealousy? Do I wish to preserve the correctness of things? Intrigue?
- (2) Eldad and Meldad did not follow the customs and Joshua denounced them. What or who moved them to act that way?
- (3) Do you think that God-Holy Spirit always conforms to human standards?
- (4) Do you think that God-Holy Spirit also acts outside the Catholic Church? Why? If possible, give examples.
- (5) Are there people who due to their hierarchy (bishops, for example) receive a greater presence of the Holy Spirit than the rest of the baptized?
- (6) Are there groups within the Church that are more inspired by the Holy Spirit than others?

## SECOND READING [ James 5 (1-6) ]

***Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries. Your wealth has rotted away, your clothes have become moth-eaten, your gold and silver have corroded, and that corrosion will be a testimony against you; it will devour your flesh like a fire. You have stored up treasure for the last days.***

***Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure; you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter. You have condemned; you have murdered the righteous one; he offers you no resistance.***

The text of this reading could be interpreted as a piece of fine humor, as it presents us with the irony of feeling sorry for those who lack nothing ... poor, the rich ... who have had the misfortune to accumulate wealth. ... Without a doubt, the direct tone that James uses touches all sensibilities. I don't think there is a person who reads this passage and doesn't feel something.

Without a doubt, this is a tough message, bluntly. It does not arrive presented through a curtain of flowery language. No. The apostle says what he has to say. He acts like the prophet we were talking about in the first reading. Here the message of God through the prophet is not so much in being rich, but in the injustices that this entails. The apostle says well when he writes: "Your wealth is corrupted."

Wealth, presented throughout human history as something desirable, suddenly appears before our eyes as a danger to what really counts for a believer: salvation. If we do not keep our eyes on the last day, wealth is meaningless, as it could be a cause for condemnation. And if it is accompanied by injustice, oppression and contempt for those who have the least, even worse.



- (1) Do you know cases of human exploitation that deserve to be reported?
- (2) What could we do in those cases?
- (3) Can there be good riches? Why?
- (4) Where is the evil of the riches referred to by the apostle James?
- (5) Read Luke 6 (20-21) and discuss. What is Jesus trying to say with those words?

## GOSPEL [ Mark 9 (37-42), (44). (46-47) ]

***At that time, John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us."***

***Jesus replied, "Do not prevent him. There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me. For whoever is not against us is for us. Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward.***

***"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.***

***If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life crippled than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna, where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'"***

The Gospel passage contains two different themes: the monopoly of the name of Jesus and the scandal within the community.

Behind John's observation there is a glimpse of group selfishness. (Let's observe the use of the plural: we have seen, we have tried ...). It is a petty fear of competition from others that sometimes masquerades as faith. The foolish disciple is envious of the prophetic work of others: "Shouldn't the Spirit of God be in our hands only, so that it can be seen that only we are the bearers of it?" In Caesar's war against Pompey there were two different attitudes: Pompey considered enemies those who did not support them openly, while the more intelligent Caesar considered as allies those who did not go against him. The enemy of Christ is one: Satan. And anyone who fulfills a mission to separate souls from his tentacles, works for Jesus Christ. In the same way, it would be necessary to recognize many people of good will, who even without knowing Christ are guides of the people with instructive words that will inevitably bring them closer to God, distancing them from the evil one. How foolish and stupid it is that within the Church there are sometimes rivalries to show that the members of this or that group do have direct access to God-Holy Spirit! We all fulfill the same collective mission, as the People of God, without distinction of capacities, abilities, charisms, or vocation. We all work for the Lord.

And we must take great care that our attitude is not a cause of scandal. For he who causes scandals is really working for the evil one, and not for the Lord. And this is what the second part of the text is about. The victims of the scandal will be those whom Jesus Christ calls "little ones" who are God's favorites. Since last Sunday we have known that the use of children is a kind of metaphor to signify all those in the community who are not "the important ones", or those who "know a lot" or those who are not "so pious" to us. This instruction of Jesus Christ ends with an invitation to live in peace. Perhaps it would be convenient to re-read the text with this last advice in mind ...

It is also worth reflecting on the recommendations to "prune" what can make us not only sin, but also cause of sin for others. The man must avoid scandalizing himself, which would be impossible if he stops fighting his own inclinations ...

(1) What was Jesus' response to the suggestion that only those in his inner circle could act on his behalf? What lesson do you get from his response?

(2) What did Jesus mean by "... cut off your hand ...", etc.? Should we take this literally?

(3) How can we identify the situations that can cause falls or sins in our lives?

(4) Explain how you understand the seven deadly sins: ANGER - LUST - SLOTH - GLORY - ENVY - PRIDE - GREED

(5) Instead of capital sins, perhaps we should talk about cardinal virtues. To the above list, match the virtue that opposes you: GENEROSITY - HUMILITY - CHASTITY - PATIENCE - TEMPERANCE - CHARITY - DILIGENCE

## CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father ...**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*