

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wherever kindness and compassion are to be found, there too is the face of God. As the Church we do not hold a monopoly of such God-given gifts. Instead we rejoice in and even learn from everyone who manifests God's presence in this way.

Today's Readings

Numbers 11:25-29

If only we all were prophets of the Lord.

James 5:1-6

Our wealth can hinder us from caring for people in need.

Mark 9:38-43. 45. 47-48

Anyone who is not against us is for us.



”ANYONE WHO IS NOT AGAINST US IS FOR US.”

Jesus' disciples had seen a man using the all-powerful name of Jesus to defeat demons. They tried to stop him because he did not belong to their group. But Jesus challenged their closed-mindedness, and encouraged them to imitate God's tolerance toward everyone of good will. No one could do a work in the name of Jesus and be his enemy. The work of the kingdom of God was not

restricted to the disciples alone; they must affirm the good in other people wherever they found it. Jesus warned them to do nothing that would scandalise his “little ones”, the poor and lowly in the Christian community. Using Semitic exaggeration, Jesus said that it would be better to enter God's kingdom crippled and maimed than to be cast into the fires of “Gehenna” (another name for the valley of Hinnom located just outside the walls of Jerusalem). Judean kings Ahaz and Manasseh carried out idolatrous worship there, which included human sacrifices to Baal (2 Chron 28:1, 3, 33:1, 6. Jer 7:30-31). Later, it served as a garbage dump where refuse and dead animals were cast into the smoldering fire to be consumed. Gehenna and its never-ending fires became synonymous with a place of total destruction and everlasting judgment of the wicked.

Reflection

A LESSON IN TOLERANCE

He who is not against us is for us.”

As we have seen plenty of times, at the time of Jesus everyone believed in demons. Everyone believed that both mental and physical illnesses were caused by the malign influence of these evil spirits. There was one very common way to exorcise them. If you could get to know the name of a still more powerful spirit and command the evil demon to come out of a person in that name, the demon was supposed to be powerless to resist. It could not stand up to the might of that more powerful name. This is the kind of picture we've got here. John had seen a man using the all-powerful name of Jesus to defeat the demons and he had tried to stop him, because he was not one of their own band of the disciples. But Jesus makes it clear that no one could do a mighty work in his name and be entirely his enemy. Then Jesus laid down the great principle that

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

This is a lesson in tolerance, and it is a lesson we've all got to learn.

- (i) Everyone's got a right to his own thoughts. Everyone's got a right to think things out and to think them through until he comes to his own conclusions and his own beliefs. And its a right we should respect. We are often too quick to condemn what we don't really understand.

There are two things we've got to remember.

- (a) There is more than one way to God. “ God,” as Tennyson has it, “ fulfils himself in many ways.” The world is round, and two people can get to precisely the same destination by starting out in precisely opposite

directions.

(b) It is necessary to remember that truth is always bigger than any one's grasp of it. No one can possibly grasp all truth.

The basis of tolerance is not a lazy acceptance of anything. It is not the feeling that we can never have certainty. The basis of tolerance is simply the realisation of the magnitude of the orb of truth.

Intolerance is a sign both of arrogance and ignorance, for it is a sign that a man believes that there is no truth beyond the truth he sees.

(ii) Not only must we concede to everyone the right to do his own thinking, we must also concede the right a person has to do his own speaking. Of all democratic rights the dearest is that of freedom of speech. There are, of course, limits. If a man is inculcating doctrines calculated to destroy morality and to remove the foundations from all civilised and Christian society, he must be combated. But the way to combat him is certainly not to eliminate him by force but to prove him wrong. Once Voltaire laid down the conception of freedom of speech in a vivid sentence. "I hate what you say," he said, "but I would die for your right to say it."

(iii) We must remember that any doctrine or belief must finally be judged by the kind of people it produces. The question must always ultimately be, not, "How is a Church governed?" but, "What kind of people does a Church produce?"



There is an old eastern fable. A man possessed a ring set with a wonderful opal. Whoever wore the ring became so sweet and true in nature that everyone loved him. The ring was like a charm. The ring was always passed down from father to son, and always it did its work. As time went by, it came to a father who had three sons; he loved them equally.

What was he to do when the time came to pass on the ring? What he did was to get another two rings made precisely the same so that no one could tell the difference. On his death-bed he called each of his sons in, spoke some words of love and to each, and, without telling the others, gave a ring.

When the three sons discovered they each had a ring, a great dispute arose as to which was the true ring that could do so much for its owner. The case was

taken to a wise judge. He examined the rings and then he spoke. “ I cannot tell which is the magic ring,” he said, “ but you yourselves can prove it.” “ We? “ asked the sons in astonishment. “ Yes,” said the judge, “ for if the true ring gives sweetness to the character of the man who wears it, then I and all the other people in the city will know the man who possesses the true ring by the goodness of his life. So go on your ways and be kind be truthful, be brave, be just in your dealings, and he who does these things will be the owner of the true ring.”

The matter was to be proved by life. No man can entirely condemn beliefs which make a man good. If we remember that, we may be less intolerant.

(iv) We may hate a person’s beliefs, but we must never hate the person. We may wish to eliminate what he teaches, but we must never wish to eliminate him.

“ He drew a circle that shut me out—
 Rebel, heretic, thing to flout.
 But love and I had the wit to win—
 We drew a circle that took him in.”

GOSPEL WORDSEARCH

S	T	S	N	I	A	G	A	S	S	MASTER
L	A	W	O	R	L	A	E	L	E	DEVILS
I	I	S	B	A	E	M	L	L	S	WATER
V	N	V	M	R	T	T	C	E	E	REWARD
E	S	E	E	A	E	A	A	H	R	MIRACLE
D	R	A	W	E	R	T	T	W	T	NECK
E	K	E	N	I	V	I	S	I	S	HELL
I	C	E	M	M	A	L	B	A	A	OBSTACLE
V	E	R	I	F	A	W	O	R	M	MILLSTONE
E	N	O	T	S	L	L	I	M	E	LAME
										FAITH
										WORM



MICHAELMAS DAY



FEAST OF SAINTS MICHAEL, GABRIEL, AND RAPHAEL, ARCHANGELS WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER.

JOHN 1:47-51 (Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14 or Revelation 12:7-12a; Psalm 138)

**“I solemnly assure you, you shall see the sky opened
and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man”.**

Nathanael ('Bartholomew' in the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke) was sceptical when Philip told him that Jesus was the promised Messiah of God. The prophet Micah said that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, David's city in Judah, whereas Jesus came from a lowly place called Nazareth in Galilee. Philip invited Nathanael to come and see for himself. Jesus overcame Nathanael's doubts by a demonstration of supernatural knowledge: “Before

Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree”. Jesus told Nathanael since there was no guile in him, he was worthy of the name “Israelite.” Jacob was the first to bear the name “Israel” even though he was a man of guile. Nathanael, the sceptic, became a believer, and he acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God. Like Jacob, who witnessed angels ascending and descending a stairway to heaven, Nathanael would witness Jesus' glorification in his resurrection and ascension.



Angels—messengers from God—aren't like the saints on the Church's calendar. They were all human beings. Angels are spiritual beings created on a higher order. Several different kinds (or ranks) of angels are mentioned in the Bible: angels, archangels, cherubim, seraphim, thrones, choirs, dominions, principalities, and powers. The

*primary duty of the Archangels is to carry out the will of God, as it relates to human beings. Angels appear frequently in Scripture, but only Michael, Gabriel and Raphael are given a name. **Michael** appears in Daniel's vision as “the great prince” who defends Israel against its enemies; in the Book of Revelation, it is he who leads God's armies to final victory over the forces of evil. **Gabriel** also makes an appearance in Daniel's visions, announcing Michael's role in God's plan. His best-known appearance is his coming to h Mary, who consents to bear the Messiah. **Raphael** is confined to the Old Testament story of Tobit where he guides Tobit's son Tobiah through a series of adventures which all lead to a happy ending: Tobiah's marriage to Sarah, the healing of Tobit's blindness, and the restoration of the family fortune. The memorials of Gabriel and Raphael were added to the Roman calendar in 1921. The 1970 revision of the calendar brought them all together on the traditional Michaelmas Day.*