

Homily—26th Sunday OT; B-cycle

“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.”

Note what Jesus says here, “whoever is NOT against us, is FOR us.”

Jesus did NOT say, “If you’re not WITH me, you’re AGAINST me!”

What’s the difference? That later statement says, unless you are mine in every detail,

you’re my enemy. But what Jesus says here has a slightly different tone than that.

Jesus is saying, as long as you’re not opposing me, as long as you’re not actively working against me, you can STILL be accepted by me. You can still be a part of this.

And I don’t know about you, but as for me, being more sinner than saint, I find this a comforting thought; that even if I don’t have ALL my ducks in a row, even if I don’t have ALL my tee’s crossed, and eyes dotted, I can still go to heaven when I die, after I’m cleansed of those imperfections in purgatory.

It should also be noted that Jesus is NOT making excuses for us, or giving us a free ride.

That’s clear by what he follows up with. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off!

If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off! If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out!

No, Jesus is NOT talking about self-mutilation. He’s using hyperbole.

He grossly exaggerating to make a point. And his point is we should radically cut out of our lives ANYTHING that causes us to sin; the TV, our music, the computer, that bottle of liquor, our friends, because nothing or no one is worth going to hell for.

So God calls us to strive for perfection, but in his mercy doesn’t hold us to the standard of perfection for salvation, though he does expect us to make the effort.

What’s the impetus of all this? What provokes it?

John says to Jesus, “we saw a man casting out a demon in your name, and he’s not of our company! Shall we tell him to stop?”

You know, some of the biggest sins we cloak under a mask of piety. John’s jealous.

Plain and simple. ‘Hey, who gave YOU permission to use OUR friend’s name?’

An identical situation is happening in the first reading.

The Lord wants Moses to give a portion of the Spirit that God has given him, and bestow

it on seventy elders in the community who will act as judges in disputes among the people.

Two of the elders who weren't there when Moses prayed over them start speaking in prophecy in the camp, and Joshua, Moses' aid, tells Moses and asks if he should make them stop. And Moses' response is great!

“Are you jealous for my sake? Would that ALL God's people were prophets! Would that God might bestow his Spirit on them ALL!”

And I say it's a great response, because Moses himself spoke prophetically here.

Because now, through the Sacraments of the Church, God HAS dispensed his Holy Spirit on ALL his people. Now we ARE all prophets.

What do you mean Father, I can't tell the future. Sure you can.

You know that if people keep turning their backs on God, as long as people keep giving themselves freely over to sin, without at least trying to resist temptation, or repenting and going to confession to get absolved, bad things are going to happen IN the world and TO the world. It's simple cause and effect.

The more we push God away, the less he is able to protect us from demonic forces.

Just as, if even a small, handful of people polluting the air and water has a negative effect on everyone. Same thing. That's what sin is; spiritual pollution.

Even if only a small number of people do it, its effects hurt everybody.

You understand this. You know the future. You're a prophet.

You understand that if you strive to live virtuously, act in kindness, and try to help the poor and unfortunate in any way you can, your eternal destination is heaven.

You understand this. You know the future. You're a prophet.

Every time you try to share your faith with someone else, or help someone to find faith, you're a prophet, because in doing that, you know what THEIR future is.

It is what is called in theology, “the economy of salvation.”

No, the economy of salvation is NOT when God balances his checkbook.

The economy of salvation is; “*The Son of God, became the Son of Man, so the sons of men, might become sons of God.*” THAT is the economy of salvation.

We all now have a means to attain eternal life through Jesus Christ.
And what Christ asks us is not complicated. It requires some self-discipline.
It requires some self-sacrifice. But it really isn't complicated.

Pope Francis just left Cuba where the Catholic religion had been persecuted and suppressed by the communist government there for half a century. Fidel Castro's regime opposed Christ.

Catholic soup kitchens, and other ministries for the poor, had to operate secretly.

Catholic Masses had to be said secretly.

And finally when the government recently lifted the suppression of the Catholic Church, Catholicism exploded onto the scene.

The love of Christ has bloomed in Cuba without an uprising; without a shot being fired, without a bomb hid secretly in a marketplace, or in a hospital, or a school bus.

That tells us at least two things; first, no force on earth can destroy the Church.

Empires rise and empires fall, and through it all the Church may shake, but the Church never falls.

The second thing it tells us is that Christ's way DOES work, if we are willing to give it a chance; if we are willing to be patient. If we are willing to sacrifice.

If we're willing to love our enemies. If we're willing to treat others the way we would want to be treated. If we are willing to let Christ change us.

Brothers and sisters, live for Christ, all the way.

Don't be satisfied with NOT opposing him, or conditionally accepting him.

OK, Lord, I'll go to Church if everything goes my way, and you give me what I want.

No. Rather, let us all strive to surrender our will to him every day until we become living images of him, and in time, we will also win a revolution with no guns, no bombs, and no blood, except the blood of Christ we consume in the Eucharist.

My prayer today is that we may we all do mighty deeds in his name.

Lord Jesus, in your mercy we beg you to speak this word...AMEN.