

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA WEYMOUTH

HOMILY FOR TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B)

30th SEPTEMBER 2012

In the first reading Moses said to Joshua: “Are you jealous on my account?”

Moses and seventy elders of the people had been praying together and received the Spirit of God which enabled them to speak as prophets. Then two men who had not been at the prayer meeting spoke as prophets, too. Joshua was angry and asked Moses for permission to stop them.

Joshua made two assumptions which Moses showed to be wrong.

The first was that God is jealous of anybody who speaks and acts in his name without being authorised by his appointed leaders.

The second assumption was that only men appointed by God had the right to say or do anything in his name.

So Moses asked: “Are you being jealous for me?” and replied “If only the whole people of God were prophets, and God had given his Spirit to them all.”

God is not jealous; he is pleased when good is done and truth is spoken by unauthorised people, so long as it is good and is true. No one can do what is good without the Spirit of God; no one can think and say what is true without the Spirit of God.

No one who does good and speaks truth can be against God. Since God is goodness and truth that would be logically impossible.

We have a very similar situation in the Gospel, a man who was not a disciple casting out devils in Jesus’ name and John wanting to stop him. This is ironic since earlier in the same chapter John and the disciples had been unable to cast out a devil without Jesus’ help.

Perhaps John was jealous. Jesus was not.

Like Moses he said: “Don’t stop him. “Anyone who is not against is for us.”

Let’s think what Jesus and Moses are telling us. They are saying that

- Anyone can speak truth and do good
- Anyone who speaks truth and does good is under the influence of God
- Anyone who is under the influence of God must be pleasing to God.

Now let’s think what this means for us as Catholics.

In the days before The Second Vatican Council (before the 1960s) we were taught that only the Catholic Church had authority to do anything in Jesus' name and only Catholic goodness was truly good and acceptable to God.

Vatican II taught us the lesson of today's readings.

We can find true goodness in the world and that we should welcome it when we find it. We can actually learn from other Christians and seekers after truth. Laypeople and other Christians reach parts that the clergy never reach.

Now as we approach Pope Benedict's Year of Faith we are being encouraged to rediscover and assert our Catholic Faith. This is a reminder that the Church is the final judge of what is true and good.

There is, however, a danger that we may go back to thinking that only Catholics have the right to speak and act as Christians.

Today's readings and the Second Vatican Council remind us that, "Anyone who is not against us is for us."

Let Blessed John Henry Newman have the last word on these words of Jesus:

"On the whole, then, I would say this; when strangers to the Church preach great Christian truths, and do not oppose the Church, then, though we may not follow them – yet we are not allowed to forbid them".

(From Fr. J. Tolhurst ed., *The Newman Compendium for Sundays and Feast days, 1995, p.154*)

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