

OT XXVI [B] Sept 29

Today's Scripture readings present us with a profound reminder of the dangers of jealousy and intolerance, and the harm they cause others. As we reflect on these messages, let us open our hearts to the wisdom of the Lord.

In our first reading, we witness a moment of jealousy that arises in Joshua. After the Spirit descends upon Moses and seventy elders, two men who were absent from the Tent of Meeting begin prophesying in the camp. Instead of celebrating this act of divine inspiration, Joshua feels threatened and seeks to stop them. Here, we see the destructive nature of envy; it blinds us to the goodness that others can bring into our lives. Moses' gentle response is a lesson for us all: "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets!" (Numbers 11:29). This call to tolerance and inclusivity echoes throughout Scripture and continues to resonate today.

In the Gospel, we find a similar scenario with the apostles. John reports to Jesus that someone outside their circle is casting out demons in Jesus' name. John's instinct is to condemn this outsider, fearing that he might undermine their authority. Yet, Jesus teaches them—and us—a critical lesson about the expansiveness of God's grace. "Do not stop him," He says, "for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me" (Mark 9:39). Jesus invites us to recognize that the work of God transcends our human boundaries and that tolerance is not merely passive acceptance but an active engagement with the good that others can offer.

The Responsorial Psalm reminds us that "the precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart." When we embrace the spirit of the Law, it not only brings us closer to God but also fills our hearts with joy. This joy, however, is often obstructed by our own judgments and jealousies. It is vital that we reflect on how our actions may lead to scandal—causing others to stumble or turn away from the faith.

James' warning in the second reading further emphasizes the call to social justice. He addresses the rich, highlighting the injustice of withholding fair wages from laborers, equating such neglect to acts of murder. This stark imagery compels us to consider our own responsibilities toward others, especially the vulnerable in our communities. Our baptism commits us to advocate for justice—not through violent means, but through love and service.

As we consider these lessons, let's reflect on how we might avoid giving scandal. We can be stumbling blocks when we are unkind, judgmental, or dismissive of others. Let us commit ourselves to being vessels of grace, extending kindness and understanding even to those we might not see eye to eye with. This calls for the Christian virtue of tolerance—a tolerance that respects differences, encourages collaboration, and seeks the good in others.

Consider these 5 steps.

1. **Avoid Unkindness:** Strive to treat everyone with the dignity they deserve, remembering that our words and actions can build up or tear down.

2. Practice Patience: Rather than judging others for their weaknesses or struggles, let us bear with them, offering support and understanding.
3. Seek Common Ground: Engage with those who hold different beliefs or perspectives, finding shared interests where we can work together for the common good.
4. Encourage One Another: Instead of discouraging others, let us be sources of encouragement, lifting each other up as we journey in faith.
5. Reflect Christ's Love: Allow the light of Christ to shine through our loving words and deeds, being a beacon of hope in a world often filled with division.

As we leave here today, may we carry these messages of tolerance and justice in our hearts, striving to be true disciples of Christ who reflect His love to all, especially to those in need. Let us pray for the grace to embody these virtues, that we may contribute to a community where all are welcomed and valued, leading to joy for ourselves and others.