

26th Sunday Ordinary Time Year “B”

September 30, 2018

Readings: Numbers 11:25-29; James 5:1-6; Mark 9: 38-43, 45-48

Occasionally, people say the most amazing things in order to make their point, knowing full well that it is unlikely that people will take them literally. As kids, did we not do things just to go along with the crowd? Our parents knew this, yet to bring home the point they exaggerated: “Well if they told you to jump off a bridge would you have done that?”

In this morning’s Gospel some very interesting advice is proffered, though not to be taken literally. Jesus does not desire for the thief to cut off his hand. Hyperbole is often used in order to get people’s attention. Jesus shocks us, first into hearing, then into heeding his voice.

Saint James employs a similar tactic in his diatribe against injustice in today’s second reading. He has seething words for those who oppress the poor, society’s most powerless. Our earthly wealth will rot; it cannot last. In effect he is saying, “Enjoy things now, for you are not going to like what you find around the next bend in the road.” St. James knew that the existence of Hell is a reality and wasn’t going to mince words out of fear.

We must be careful to avoid two extremes. First, passing judgment on the state of another’s soul is neither our prerogative, nor are we the gatekeepers of heaven. At the same time, we have not only a right, but a duty, to speak up in truth and justice about what we see before us. It is the classic distinction between judging actions and judging souls.

The disciples were confused because they saw someone not of their ‘company’ attempting to expel demons. Jesus warned them not to intervene. No one who performs a miracle in my name can at once speak ill of me. But perhaps the greatest condemnation is reserved for those who lead the young people astray. It would be better for them to have a millstone tied around their neck.

We priests have a monumental task ahead of us in order to be seen as authentic witnesses of the vocation to which we have been called in the

Church. Just yesterday, the Holy Father encouraged Catholics all over the world to pray the Rosary each and every day during the month of October. He requested that we conclude the Rosary with two additional prayers: the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel and also the oldest known prayer to Mary, the *Sub Tuum Praesidium*. I intend to make these prayers available in Church for your use.

I fully endorse this call for prayer, especially the rosary during October. We will host an evening candlelight Rosary Procession this Friday evening, the details of which may be found in the bulletin. As I have said before, and which bears repeating, prayer must be combined with action.

I pray that the Holy Father will heed the requests of the leadership of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, who were received in audience with the Holy Father on September 13. During that audience, Cardinal DiNardo had indicated his intention to request called for “an Apostolic Visitation, working in concert with a national lay commission granted independent authority, to seek the truth.”¹

I wholeheartedly endorse the Holy Father’s plea in asking us to put the Church under the protective mantle of the Blessed Virgin, especially to make us ever more aware of the faults and errors with respect to both the abuses that have been perpetrated in the past and present and imploring without any doubt whatsoever that such evils may never prevail again.

Let us pray to wholeheartedly embrace the Good News of the Gospel, not out of fear, but because we are attracted to the person of Jesus Christ, he who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

We fly to Thy protection, O Holy Mother of God. Do not despise our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O Glorious and Blessed Virgin.²

¹ Cardinal Daniel DiNardo statement of August 27, 2018

² “Sub tuum praesidium confugimus Sancta Dei Genitrix. Nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus, sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo Gloriosa et Benedicta”.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil; may God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl through the world seeking the ruin of souls.³

³ “Sancte Michael Archangele, defende nos in proelio; contra nequitiam et insidias diaboli esto praesidium. Imperet illi Deus, supplices deprecamur: tuque, Princeps militiae caelestis, Satanam aliosque spiritus malignos, qui ad perditionem animarum pervagantur in mundo, divina virtute, in infernum detrude. Amen”.