

September 30, 2018
26th Sunday of Ordinary Time

One way that the Church, the people of God, can lose our way is when we turn in on ourselves. When we fall into becoming more concerned about maintaining ourselves instead of proclaiming the Kingdom of God, we become spiritually sick.

Joshua, in the Book of Numbers, and the disciples in the Gospel of Mark, have fallen in the trap of turning in on themselves. Joshua was a close disciple of Moses and the twelve disciples had an intimate relationship with Jesus as their teacher and master. In both cases, this powerful experience of the Spirit of the living God, led them to the false notion that the Holy Spirit was working in them in an exclusive way. The Moses gives Joshua and Jesus gives the disciples a strong correction to any sense of “us and them” mentality regarding the powerful experience of God they have had. Moses responds by saying that he would hope that the Spirit would come upon everyone so that they could prophesy. Jesus says that anyone who is not against us is for us and that anyone who gives even a cup of cold water in my name will not go without his or her reward.

We have a strongly developed theology in our Catholic faith. Not every Christian faith will agree with how we interpret the scriptures. We believe that there are seven books of the Old Testament that are the inspired word of God, a part of the canon of the Bible. Most Christians don't agree and they call those seven books the Apocrypha. Our theology of the sacraments is very well defined. Not every Christian Church agrees. Our understanding of the Church and how it is structured is part of what sets us apart from other Christians. Believers are seekers of the truth that God has revealed and we believe that the

Catholic Church holds the fullness of that truth. There can be a danger in all of this, and that danger is that we can begin to think like Joshua and the disciples, in an “us and them” mentality and that the Holy Spirit works only in certain ways and among certain people. Even with all the differences that there are among Christians, there is much more that unites us than what divides us. To a lesser degree there is much that can unite us with those who believe in God and are not Christian. There are even ways for us to work in union with those who don’t believe in God and who are people of good will.

Consider the words from the fourth Eucharistic Prayer when remember the pope, our bishops, the clergy and for “those who take part in this offering, those gathered here before you, your entire people, and all who seek you with a sincere heart.” The Vatican II document on Ecumenism calls for every Catholic to work for the restoration of unity among all Christians in response to Jesus who prayed to the Father, “That they all may be one”. The document makes clear that this is what needs to happen for the Church to be reformed. In the Vatican II document on relations with non-Christian religions we read: “The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all- powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth.” (*Nostra Aetate*, # 3). These documents are the official teaching of the Church.

What can we do to guard against an “us and them” mentality? One would be to read the two Vatican II documents, the one on Ecumenism and the other on relations with non-Christian religions. They are not long and they are easy to read. Through the magic of internet search engines, all you have to type is “Vatican II document on Ecumenism” or Vatican II Document on relations with non-Christians, and there you have it. Almost everyone can do that. We at St. Louise have had an interfaith Covenant Community for nearly 30 years. The members include the Church of The Resurrection Episcopal, Cross of

Christ Lutheran, Temple B'nai Torah and we are also in dialogue with the Islamic Center of Bellevue. That is something that flows from the teaching of the scripture as well as the teaching of the Church. If you haven't gone to the interfaith Thanksgiving celebration, you might consider doing so, it is the night before Thanksgiving, Wednesday, November 21 at 7:30 pm here at St. Louise this year. There is also an interfaith presentation each year in January at Cross of Christ Lutheran. Another way to think of these scripture is through the messages that we have heard from the Letter of James every Sunday in the month of September. Over and over again we have heard about the importance of serving the poor. Projects Hearts and Hammers is a project that our Covenant Community sponsor every May. The project helps elderly in the community with improvements that they need for their homes that they themselves are not able to do. It helps them to continue to live in their homes.

We are called by the word of God today to be good stewards of our time, that is our prayer, of our talent, that is our service, and our treasure, that is the money that God gives us. We start here at St. Louise, and then we go out beyond ourselves. That is the only way if we are going to be faithful to the movement of the Holy Spirit.