

Twenty Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

***Everyone today, wants and hopes for a relatively easy life. We know that we must work, but we also hope the work is not too difficult. We want to live as pain-free as possible.

-We work for and hope for the possessions that will bring us enjoyment. We want the best for our families and loved ones. And most of us want to live as long as we can.

-Unfortunately, life is seldom, if ever, the way that we would like it to be. We have to swallow the reality pills of sickness, unemployment, natural catastrophes and death in our families.

Truly good people recognize these realities. They make the best out of any difficult or painful situation. And, usually, they try to live within their means. However, sometimes we take shortcuts. We do things that are not right. We take advantage of others by exploiting their generosity. We don't lend a helping hand.

Tragically, many people go even further. They sin. They do things that are terribly wrong. They get so far off the path of goodness, that they become immersed, even addicted to ungodly things. -----

-They gossip, because it feeds their ego. They depreciate others because those others are perceived as a threat to themselves or to their loved ones. They tell lies to enhance themselves or to escape pain. They resort to violence in word or deed because

they are angry. They get hooked on alcohol, drugs, or pornography as an escape or, perhaps, out of curiosity. They refuse to avoid others who they know will mislead or even take advantage of them! There are also those who pile up wealth for themselves or their family, forgetting the needs of the poor and turn a blind eye to the inequity in the world. They do little or nothing to help others who are truly suffering.

-All the scriptures for today deal with what we have considered thus far. In the Book of Numbers, Joshua is overprotective. He is jealous on behalf of Moses. He wanted Moses to silence Eldad and Medad. He thought they were unqualified to prophesy. However, Moses was older and far more experienced. He knew the surprising ways of God. Moses reminded Joshua that God could bless anyone and everyone with special gifts.

-In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus gives the same message to his cousin, John. Anyone who does anything good in the name of Jesus – was doing godly work. They should not be impeded or silenced! Then Jesus adds a severe warning for everyone in his teaching. He speaks about ungodly and sinful behavior and the harm it does to others. It can cause others to sin. Moreover, we will be severely punished for doing so.

-Consequently, we must sever ourselves from anything or any person that causes us to sin or to do harm to others. A hand, a

foot, an eye were the examples that Jesus used. For ourselves, it might be a person, a place, or a thing that lights the fires of our pride, our greed, our lust, our anger, our sloth, or our envy.

-Of course, there are always those who argue that Hell or eternal damnation do not exist. Nevertheless, Jesus warns that: escape from the plunge with the millstone is impossible, the fire of Gehenna is unquenchable, life in that existence is endless!

Furthermore, it is to our everlasting advantage to enter our eternal life maimed than to be damned. It is better to enter eternal life without something we thought was important than to be denied because of something we thought that we could not live without, here and now!

-We all know the journey to eternal life with God is long and arduous for most of us. Everyone accumulates baggage along the way. Some of what we acquire is good and is a blessing. Some of it is toxic and harmful for our soul and spirit. The sooner we separate ourselves from ungodly things, the better. For then we can travel more swiftly on God's path for us. So let us pray for wisdom and insight. May we recognize the things or relationships that are harmful. And may God enable us to live without them and according to His will and special plan for us!