



The Holy Spirit Province NEWSLETTER

21 September 2021



BELIEVERS TOGETHER: 26TH SUNDAY B

Numbers 11:25-29; James 5:1-6; Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

A Hollywood star of the 1930s and 1940s, Greta Garbo, is famous for saying 'I want to be alone.' But it's only human and natural to want to be with other people. Many of us join a club or other group for that reason. It may be a group at work, such as a football tipping competition. It may be a sporting group like a football, cricket, netball, bowls, golf, fishing, or tennis club. It may be a social group, e.g., people that get together to play cards. It may be a political party. It may be a church group, such as 'Passionist Family Groups'. Some of us may belong to several groups at once.

We join because we want to meet other people, join in the activities of the group, and work for the goals of the group. Being with other people widens our horizons and gives us the satisfaction of feeling wanted, accepted, and respected. Life in a group, however, can become a problem if the group becomes exclusive, if its members snipe at or about others, and if they become either fearful or contemptuous of persons outside the group.

In our gospel today, the apostles are feeling very threatened by a man outside their group who is successfully casting out demons in the name of Jesus. Perhaps they are afraid Jesus will invite him to replace them. But like some selfish child who has more than enough toys but won't share any, they seek to stop the man in his tracks. But Jesus is much more generous than they. He tells them to let the outsider be: 'You must not stop him,' he says, 'anyone who is not against us is for us.'

Some of us were brought up to believe that ours is the one and only true Church. The Second Vatican Council did not push that line. While it did assert that our Catholic Church is directly descended from Jesus Christ and the apostles, and while it did assert that our Catholic Church has all the means of salvation – ways of being at right with God - it recognized that Christians in other denominations can be real and genuine followers of Jesus. Just like Catholics! As the famous Irish writer James Joyce once put it: 'Here comes everybody!'. Vatican II recognized that through baptism, non-Catholic Christians too are joined to the person of Jesus, are members of his body on earth, and are destined to enjoy the company of God forever in heaven. Just like Catholics!

So, even though we have our differences, some of them quite serious, Vatican II called non-Catholic Christians 'brothers and sisters', not outsiders, and certainly not heretics or impostors. It also recognized that their churches are anything but fakes and shams. Their churches also bring the grace of God - the presence and love of God - to their members. Like the Catholic Church, they too are expressions of the Christian church as a whole.

So, while we rightly take pride in all the many good features of our Catholic community, we also recognize and affirm all the good people and all the good deeds that exist in the Anglican, the Uniting, the Baptist, the Pentecostal, and the Lutheran forms of the one Church of Jesus Christ, just to name a few. We do this even as we also pray that we and they will in time become more united in faith, hope, and love than we are already.

Another great truth proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council, one that also leads to tolerance, dialogue, and cooperation, is that the Spirit of God - the Holy Spirit - influences the minds, hearts, and lives of persons in the other great world religions, e.g., Islam. There are people in other world faiths living near us wherever we are. Some, like us, believe in one true God. So, we must meet them, accept and affirm them, as good people too and as children of God, children of the one Creator who through our human parents has made us all. Like us, they too keep striving to know and live that truth which the Spirit of God keeps making known in our various faith communities. As Jesus said it so well, 'the wind (of the Spirit) blows where it pleases' (John 3:8)! I offer two striking examples: - Moslem Doctor Jamal, has made a drive-in clinic in the front yard of his Sydney home, and has so far administered 35,000 Covid jabs. Throughout this pandemic the Sikh Community of Victoria has been serving many thousands of free meals to poor persons and health workers.

So, for the continuation of the presence and influence of the Spirit of God among all our communities of faith, let us keep giving praise and thanks to God - their Lord, their King. and ours!

May the Passion of Jesus Christ and his everlasting love, be always within our minds and hearts!

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