

International Mass 2015

27 September 2015

Tokyo Cathedral

26th Sunday, Day for Migrants, Refugees, and People on the Move

1st Reading: Numbers 11:25-29

2nd Reading: James 5:1-6

Gospel: Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

In today's Gospel, Jesus criticizes the narrow sectarianism of the disciples.

John says to Jesus: "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." Jesus answers: "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:38-40).

Here the "name" means Jesus' name. To cast out demons by using his name is to win over the power of evil by the power of the Holy Spirit. John says "he was not following us," but the one who did not follow drove out demons not by the power of the disciples but by the power of Jesus. Therefore it does not make sense for them to try to stop the man. Maybe they feared a loss of control because they felt he was encroaching on their power.

Jesus' idea is different. He criticizes the disciples' narrow and exclusive sectarianism when he says: "Whoever is not against us is for us." (Mark 9:40)

In today's first reading, Joshua son of Nun is jealous of the fact that the Spirit given to Moses is also given to the seventy elders. Joshua, too, is anxious to monopolize the gift like John and the others.

What Jesus intends to say here is to "be generous because God is generous." God's work, the operation of the Holy Spirit, is not confined by space or time. It goes on among the various sects of Christian churches and other religions as well, and even among those who think themselves to be unbelievers.

We need to appreciate willingly all the good things, beautiful things, and the

truths that can be seen outside our Church. We must respect the right of the freedom of faith of those whose understanding of faith is different from that of ours.

The Catholic Church in this respect must reflect on her attitudes seriously. It is true that there were periods in the history of the Church when they thought they had to respect the freedom of faith.

However, it was only at Vatican II that the Church arrived at the present understanding of the basic human rights concerning the freedom of faith. Namely, we came to affirm our realization that “we must be open about other people’s faiths and that the freedom of faith belongs to the important and basic human rights.”

Japan is a country with many religions. Here, we need to go beyond the differences of religions and religious organizations and respect each other’s positions in order to work together for peace, life and human dignity, and to work against the power of evil.

Today is the day for “Migrants, Refugees, and People on the Move.” At present so many people are in circumstances where they are obliged to become refugees or migrants. Their afflictions surpass our imagination. The Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, were also refugees. For us Christians, it is a matter of course that we share our wealth, assets, and money with those in trouble. We must go beyond the differences of our creeds, nationalities, cultures, languages, and practices and mutually share the good things and put our forces together so as to destroy the evil that entraps human beings. Let us ask for God’s help and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let us offer our heartfelt thanks for the gifts given and praise the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Blessed be the Lord Jesus who became a human being like us!

Now I would like to take this opportunity to make a special request. From October 26th to 28th there is going to be a Priests’ Assembly at the Cathedral. Every priest working in the Tokyo diocese is strongly urged to attend it. The priests working at CTIC and the priests who are involved in the activities of CTIC, please be sure to come and discuss how to improve the future of CTIC. Thank you.