

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, September 26, 2021
26th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle B

I remember when I worked in the Archdiocese of Manila. In the parish where I was assigned there were two religious groups complaining to each other. Both of these groups claimed that they were the “official” group in the parish to give retreats and recollections. This situation gave a lot of headaches to the pastor. In my mind, I was wondering why were they competing. Instead, they should cooperate with one another. This kind of situation is very common in some Catholic countries.

The Gospel today shows how this same cohesion and attachment are alive among the bond of the apostles. We see how successful the disciples of Jesus were in forming unity among themselves. They lived together under the leadership of the Master. They became friends with each other, familiar and comfortable in each other’s presence. But there was a problem that this kind of unity entailed. The apostles developed the attitude of exclusivity and elitism. As soon as they heard that somebody unknown to the group was using Jesus’ name to expel demons, they wanted to put a stop to the person’s ministry. In their mind, only they were the “official” apostles.

At this the Lord comes to teach valuable lesson. The words Jesus speaks are inclusive rather than exclusive. “Do not try to stop him. Anyone who is not against us is with us.” This shows how broad and spacious is the heart of Jesus and the saving designs of his Father. The disciples needed to develop graciousness and generosity towards their neighbors. Jesus’ response manifest once again how different God’s ways are from our natural inclinations and preferences.

The apostle’s attitude is still very concrete in our world today. Our own experiences show how much we value only those who belong to our particular groups, our faith, our communities, our families. We jealously guard ourselves from the intrusion or influence of other people. We easily develop an exclusive mindset, unwilling to expose ourselves to other

people's possible contributions to our lives. In an age of globalization, we tend to live in narrow worlds and move in limited confines.

In our growing world today, we see how we prefer to work only with like-minded people. A dissenting vote is seen as an annoyance that must be eliminated or subdued. In politics, business, academe, and even in the Church. We have a long way to go in realizing that if we open our hearts and minds, we will discover so many treasures and talents in other people who are only waiting to be invited, heard, and appreciated.

As Christians who truly follow the Lord, we need to break free from our exclusive mindset and be enriched by other's influence in our life. Like Jesus, we need to be open and be richly blessed.

Amen