

Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

I often do not enjoy a football match as much as I could because I give my support to one side or the other even if they are not my home team. I am disappointed if the team I am supporting loses. How many of us will watch tonight's grand final free enough to enjoy the game no matter who wins?

Not everybody in the two stories that we read today were ready to enjoy the game no matter who wins. When the Spirit of God was given to the seventy people called to assist Moses in his work of governing the people of Israel, many got upset when two of them, Eldad and Medad, were prophesizing in the wrong place. They were kicking goals from outside the boundary. The other prophets wanted Moses to stop them. But Moses rejoiced that God's Spirit was working in them no matter where they were.

The disciples of Jesus have a similar problem when they hear that there were others outside their own group who were healing in the name of Jesus. They wanted Jesus to stop them. But Jesus had to tell his disciples that God is at work beyond their own group. "No one who works a miracle in my name is likely to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us."

Many of us have a problem with that. We have grown up greatly valuing our tradition of faith, our own Catholic faith, that we find it hard to look over the fence and see that God is also at work in other Christian traditions and far beyond. Jesus is at work even in those who have not explicit faith in him. In some mysterious way God's Spirit breaks all the rules that we may put upon God and uses whoever God chooses to do the work that God wants.

Does that mean that all the efforts that we make to listen for the ways that God wants to use us are in vain? No. We make good decisions for ourselves and others because we are willing to listen for the ways that God leads us. Our catholic faith has trained us and continues to equip to be good players in the game of life. We learn that living as disciples of Jesus is a team game. We do our best to support others and we learn how to be supported by those around us.

The second half of the gospel talks about what can get in the way of being a good team player. Jesus talks about being an obstacle or a tripping stone to bring down one of the little ones who have faith. The one who trips up others and leads them into sin would be better thrown into the sea with a millstone around their neck. Jesus continues with those exaggerated images to alert us to the disordered desires within ourselves that may trip us up. When we become aware of those things, we can

more easily avoid them and not trip over them and fall on our face.

The letter from James that we read today alerts us to the way that our desire to be wealthy can be a tripping stone for us. He reminds us that when we desire more than we need we are in danger of depriving others of what they need to live on. The challenge is always there for us to use well whatever God has given to us and to trust that what we have is enough.

To hear what the Holy Spirit might be saying no matter who the Spirit may be using, is something that our local church and the wider Australian Church is doing at this time. We have just been part of a Diocesan Assembly. All of us were invited to suggest what that Assembly should be talking about. Over 400 people gathered last weekend at Cabra College to reflect upon the six themes that those suggestions had been gathered into. It was a very positive, prayerful and joyful celebration of who we are as the Church of Adelaide. The Assembly had been very well organized. Archbishop Patrick set the tone of what our task was. We were given two opportunities to meet in small groups to share our experiences of a theme we had chosen and our thoughts about it. We respectfully listened to one another before making recommendations about the theme. The final session on Saturday gave us all the opportunity to indicate what

recommendations should have a priority. On Thursday night we gathered again to receive the report of the Assembly and to be commissioned to carry out those recommendations. It was the opportunity also to begin to form a new Diocesan Pastoral Council.

Our Diocesan Assembly was part of the preparation for the Plenary Council that has its first gathering next Sunday. But the Plenary Council has been listening to what the Spirit has to say to us for over two years. In many ways the process of listening has been and will be more important than the recommendations that may come from the Council when it concludes its work next year. We can learn much about how we are called to be Church from the way that the Diocesan Assembly and the Plenary Council are listening to the Holy Spirit.

Our readings today remind us that the Spirit is at work in people and in places that may surprise us. May our ears and our hearts be always open to what the Spirit may be saying.