

## HOMILY 26<sup>TH</sup> SUN OT YRB 2018

There are two main types of priests. One is diocesan priests. That is what I am. We are tied to a diocese, can be assigned wherever the diocese assigns priests, and we are primarily pastors. There are also religious order priests. The religious order normally has a specific charism like the Dominicans are preachers, the Franciscans work with the poor and the Jesuits are educators. They can be assigned wherever the religious order makes assignments. Several years ago, a friend of mine, who was a member of a religious order, was being ordained a priest. I wanted to support him, so I went to the ordination with a couple other diocesan priests. When we got to the ordination they directed us to the room where all of the priests were vesting. There were vestments laid out for all of the priests. They told us that since we were not part of their religious order that we could not wear their vestments. This made no sense to us but it was ok because we were prepared. We each brought an alb and stole. Then when we lined up to process into Mass they told us that we could not sit with the other priests. The diocesan priests would have to sit separately. Now that made no sense to us, and it did not make us feel welcome to participate in the ordination, but we did not want to make an issue of it, so we just went along.

In the first reading today, God told Moses to pick 70 elders to be prophets. The Spirit descended upon them and they began to prophesy. Two of the elders were not with the other 68 when the Spirit was bestowed upon them and they started to prophesy as well. Joshua told Moses to stop them. Moses said why would I do that? I would be glad if God made everyone a prophet. Something similar happened in the Gospel reading today. Someone, who was not one of the 12 apostles, was driving out demons in Jesus name. John told Jesus to stop him. Jesus said why would I do that? Whoever is not against us is for us. I think in both cases, those in the group who were chosen wanted to limit things to the members of the group. Moses and Jesus told the people that we cannot limit the good works that people are doing. I think there are good things going on in all religions and outside of organized religions. I think there are people who are moved by the Spirit they cannot name to do the work of a Jesus that they do not know, and all of that is good.

I think there are people who have a very small view of the Church. The Church should be limited to a small group of people who accept and believe everything that the Catholic Church teaches lives by all of the

rules. If that were true there would be no one in the Church including me. We have to be very mindful about welcoming everyone. In the story I told you earlier about the experience I had at ordination, do you think the members of that religious order were trying to make the diocesan priests feel unwelcome? I don't think so. If they did not want us to come why would they send us an invitation? But conscious or not, we felt unwelcome.

I think we need to look at how we behave and see if we are making anyone feel unwelcome at St. Edith. One of the things that I changed myself is how I viewed Parishioners. I used to make a distinction between those who were formally registered in the Parish, but I do not do that any longer. I like people to be registered you make a commitment to being part of our Parish Family, so you receive our mailings and if you contribute to support the Parish that we can keep track of what you contribute for tax purposes, but in terms of participating in the life of the Parish it makes no difference if you are a registered member or not. So many divorced people over the years have told me that they do not feel welcome after they get divorced that we must be doing something to contribute to that. Spread the word that divorced people are welcome. A divorce does not change your status in the Catholic Church. You can fully participate in the sacramental life of the church. A divorce is very painful to go through and people need the Church and their Parish Family more than ever for love and support when they are going through a divorce. What about LGBT people. Do we do things to make them feel less than welcome? It is who they are, not a choice. Who would choose the hate and discrimination they face every day. They need a Parish Family to love and support them as they figure out to cope with daily life. And what about special needs individuals? Sometimes they look and act differently. Sometimes that makes us uncomfortable, but that is about us not them. Maybe we need to get to know them better so we can be more comfortable. We need them in our Parish Family. And what about people who have made some mistakes in their lives? God forgives them and so must we. Let's face it, we are all sinners but some sin is more public than others. Are we really going to reject the people whose sin is well known? If we are going to be a Catholic Community, everyone must be welcome.