Fr Matthew Charlesworth, SJ
https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Date: Sunday, January 21, 2024 | **Season:** Ordinary Time before Easter | **Year:** B
First Reading: Jonah 3:1–5, 10
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 25:4–9 | **Response:** Psalm 25:4a
Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:29–31
Gospel Acclamation: Mark 1:15
Gospel Reading: Mark 1:14–20
Preached at: St Peter Faber Jesuit Community **in the** Archdiocese of Melbourne, Australia**.**

Just before today's first reading, at the start of this 18th chapter, we're told that:

> When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. (1 Sam 18:1)

Unlike Saul who herded donkeys and perhaps was given to reigning over a rebellious people, David was a simple shepherd – probably oblivious to the palace intrigues, and a person more after the Lord's own heart perhaps, and so when he did battle we heard yesterday how he came with a sling and some stones. The making of an unlikely hero, but not the poster-boy for Sauls military. Just before today's reading begins, we're told that Jonathan favours David by giving him his robes, armour and sword – thus turning him into a proper soldier.

I do not know if any of you have seen the TV series, Kings? It was around 2009 and starred Ian McShane and others. Unfortunately, all my favourite TV series seem to get cancelled after the first season and we never saw the completion – but this was an excellent TV show set around the figures in the Book of Kings, and featuring King Saul, David, Jonathan etc. It's set in a sort of modern-day Iraq (Goliath was pictured as a tank) but the spoken English is old, poetic, even Shakespearean at times, and it retells the biblical story quite well – though perhaps Brendan and Gerry might not approve. Anyway – today's readings are about Jealousy and through the many episodes, it shows that well.

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2024-01jan-21-yb-ot-03/

Our reading today opens by saying that, as David and Saul returned from David's famous victory over Goliath, the women came out from all the cities, singing and dancing, saying that. "Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

It is a measure of Saul's insecurity and jealousy that he took this literally and not figuratively, as they were rejoicing in both men in fact. But Saul's resentment is triggered simply by having David's name put alongside his own. From then on a seething jealousy and resentment against David grew in Saul's heart. As so often happens, jealousy gives way to even worse things, and the thought of murder begins to grow, until this thought becomes a firm intention and a foiled plan.

In fact, Saul was really hoping David would not have been victorious at all yesterday – him dying at Goliath's hands would have solved this problem. Of course, ironically, sending the object of one's displeasure to war to die will become a family tradition of sorts, as David himself will do exactly the same thing against the husband of a woman with whom he had an adulterous affair.

Today's reading actually jumps around a bit and after David Saul offers his daughter, Michal, to David to marry, and Michal genuinely loves him, but for some reason that relationship is not mentioned today, and it was never to be sincere. Saul had hoped by including David in his family, he would become a target of the Philistines. And when that does not work, Saul then tries to get his son to lead David astray, but Jonathan warns David and later intercedes to Saul on David's behalf. After all, David had done so much to protect Saul and the people by his exploits. Why kill innocent blood?

Considering that David could have been seen as a threat to Jonathan's own expectations of succeeding his father, his behaviour is both an indication of Jonathan's integrity and his love and respect for David. Their relationship represents the loyalty and companionship God wants to offer each of us through his covenant. Saul was won over by Jonathan and swore not to kill David, who was then reinstated fully. However, Saul had made promises in 2 the past and not kept them. And he won't keep this one for very long either.

So that's the message of the first reading once we pare away the intrigue and politics and the soap story – jealousy and the bizarre, perhaps out-of-character actions it can lead us towards. We see it to in the Gospel, in fact, which shares

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2024-01jan-21-yb-ot-03/

the scene right before Jesus chooses the twelve apostles. The crowds follow Jesus and it is the jealousy of the scribes and pharisees, those religious people, for the growing popularity of Jesus and their worry that he will eclipse their own authority, that lead them to eventually plot against him. Perhaps we might imagine the jealousy present in the crowd too as they saw some closer to Jesus than the others. We also see in the Gospel how the unclean spirits speak to Jesus, recognizing him correctly as 'the Son of God'… but this is not a confession of faith for them, for knowing a person's true name was a way of trying to counter them – and so the evil spirits are trying to overwhelm Him, but they are unsuccessful.

So how does this speak to us today in Melbourne in 2024? As we continue to set out on our tertianship together, we might, I suggest, consider the times in the past we have been jealous, perhaps of others in our community or Province who had missions different to ours? Perhaps of a time in our youth when we did something we now regret out of jealousy or fear of someone gaining favour over us? Or whatever it was. And armed with our experience of discerning the Good spirit and bad spirit in our lives now, might we look back at those moments and recognize the Jealousy and that insidious voice of the Evil Spirit that led us to start comparing ourselves – an exercise that always leads towards desolation? Let's give thanks for the ability to learn from our past mistakes, and for the wisdom in the Exercises that can save us from such mistakes.

Sometimes jealousy can be linked as well to our own insecurities – in such a way that experiencing jealousy can be an opportunity for insight and revelation for us. Perhaps we can offer those to God as well during the offertory? Where we feel insecure or uncertain? Where we feel jealous or hurt?

Jealousy can also come from not fully accepting what and who one is. It is often difficult to see others surpassing the skills of which we were proud – like Saul fears the younger David becoming more popular and replacing him as King – which he does of course. As we grow older, perhaps we too must face that fear of diminishment – but let's remember the example of John the Baptist, who a few weeks ago announced that he must decrease so that Christ might increase.

St Ignatius also offers us an antidote or vaccine against Jealousy. He uses the concept of body in the Constitutions in a particular way. We are all members of the one body, without competition or comparison, and all of us sent in some way

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 · https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2024-01jan-21-yb-ot-03/

to fulfill the mission in such a way that God's Kingdom, and not our own, is built-up and brought to fruition through the sharing of God's good news to his people.

The cure for jealousy is for us to accept fully our strengths and our weaknesses and not to measure our success as persons by what we can do or by what people think of us. All that matters is that God be given glory and that the work of the Kingdom be done. Ignatius was surely right in making a motto for the Society, AMDG, all for the greater glory of God. Let us make that refrain our own today as we contemplate all that we have been jealous of, and instead give thanks to God for all that he has still blest us with.

Source: https://sj.mcharlesworth.fr/homilies/2024-01jan-21-yb-ot-03/

This homily is shared for personal and pastoral use. Please attribute the author and do not alter the meaning when quoting. If you wish this homily to be translated - there is an option on the website which will allow you to translate it into the language of your choice.

Licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license.

The author does not speak for the Society of Jesus or for the Catholic Church.

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on **WhatsApp**

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on **Telegram**

Receive Fr Matthew Charlesworth's Homilies on **Signal**

Scan for Website on **Clearnet**

Scan for Onion Mirror **via TOR**