

## Homily - September 5, 2021 - 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Deacon Steve Livingston

This year ... we are in Cycle “B” in our three-year cycle of readings. And as such, we concentrate ... on the Gospel of St. Mark. But in Cycle “B” we also get **another** opportunity. Our **New** Testament reading is the second of five readings in a row from the Letter of St. James. We don’t hear a lot from the letter of St. James and that’s a shame because St. James reminds us of some things we really need to hear. He challenges us, makes us uncomfortable and gives us a new **lens** ... to look at the **rest** of Sacred Scripture.

Those who believe that: “a person is justified by faith ... **alone**” ... have a lot of **difficulty** ... with the Letter of St. James ... because St. James ... is all about how we **act** ... what we **do** ... how we **behave**. It is not **enough** ... to believe ... **we** ... **must** ... **do!** What we **believe** must be ... **demonstrated** by how we behave ... how we **act!** St. James tells us that ... if we are to **be** Christians ... we must **behave** like Christians!

Today ... St. James is talking about **discrimination** ... and the unfair **judgments** we make about people. St. James challenges us today ... as he always does ... to look at our **behavior** ... with “Christian” **eyes** ... to hear ourselves ... with “Christian” **ears**.

Do we cater to the rich ... and treat the poor with contempt? ... Do we look down upon those who do not **look** like us ... or do not **talk** like us ... do not **worship** like us ... or have different **customs**? When we make ... unfair and **sinful** judgments ... about those not ... “**like** us” ... we not only ... do **not** demonstrate our faith ... we make ... our faith ... a **lie**.

This weekend we prepare to observe our annual national celebration of work ... and ... workers ... and ... I think the occasion begs us to examine our consciences for ways we might **sinfully** discriminate in any or all of those parts of our lives involving ... **work**. Do we make judgments about our brothers and sisters ... in the way they earn their daily bread? Do we **judge** people by how much money they make? Do we mentally assign certain occupations as appropriate **only** ... for certain ethnic or racial groups? Do we

consider the executive ... the doctor ... the lawyer ... the banker ... .. the clergyman ... as ... **superior** ... to those who do heavy labor ... work with their hands ... or perhaps do the sort of work we **tell** ourselves **we** ... wouldn't do! Do we use terms like "he (or she) is **only** a clerk ... **only** a dishwasher ... **only** a garbage collector ... **only** a fruit picker ... or ... (Donna's **personal** favorite) ... **only** a housewife? Do we ever give a thought to how ... these folks make our lives better ... and how much we need them? ... Do we ever take the time to thank our God for them? This weekend might be a good time.

In our jobs ... do we discriminate and make unfair judgments about those we work with ... those we serve ... those we work for? If we are in contact with customers, do we treat all fairly? If we are in positions where we **hire** ... or **promote** ... or ... determine **salaries**, wages or prices... are we fair ... or do we discriminate? Do we ever thank **God** ... for those we work **with** ... or work **for** ... or for those who work for us? This weekend might be a good time.

In the Gospel ... Our Lord heals a deaf man. ... The challenges of St. James can **indeed** be hard to hear ... and I think sometimes ... we perhaps experience some subconscious ... selective deafness ... to avoid the discomfort of listening to them. After all ... what we **cannot** ... or **will** not hear will **never** disturb us. But ... St. James will **not** go away and we have **three** more readings from him over the next three weeks, so ... if we have never taken the time to pray that our loving Lord might not only open our **ears** ... but also our minds ... and our hearts. ... .. This weekend might be a good time for that too. ... Have a blessed and safe Holiday weekend!