

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year B

Numbers 11:25-29

Ps 19:8, 10, 12-13, 14

James 5:1-6

Mark 9:38-43,45,47-48

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It seems to happen as the result of being a part of any institution, administration, group or community. One is seen as either an insider or an outsider. And such division within a group often prompts us to question: Whose voice or opinion matters? Whose does not? Who has the vision? Who does not? Or, in the case of today's first reading and Gospel: who can or cannot prophesy; who can or cannot heal?

In the Gospel, the disciples go to Jesus and tell him they have found someone driving out demons in his name. Further, they tried to stop him because "he does not follow us." In other words, he is outside the group. As Jesus so often does, he uses the experience of the disciples to teach them, to expand their thinking and widen their hearts. "Do not prevent him. There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me." Jesus was giving the disciples a lesson in tolerance. Perhaps He also was telling them to be careful not to limit God's spirit. The Spirit and mission of God were not to be claimed exclusively by the Twelve, but would be shared with many. "Whoever is not against us is for us."

In essence, Jesus is making a statement about the importance of thinking inclusively in ministry, whether one is an ordained or lay minister. Be aware of the presence of God all around you! Be open to those who can teach you and challenge you to look at things differently. Look for God in those you might consider to be "outside your circle." Look for God in unexpected relationships and events.

Today's Gospel invites you and me to consider: whom do I sometimes label as insiders or outsiders when I think of family members, relationships at work, fellow parishioners and neighbors? In what situations and with whom might I be attempting to stifle God's spirit? Where am I being called to be more inclusive in how I relate to others and how I view the world?

Finally, during the month of October, the Church calls us to be ever mindful of life issues, and to respect the dignity of life from conception to the natural end of one's life. Let us pray in this Eucharist and in every Eucharist for respect for all life. Especially, may we see the unborn not as "outsiders," but as precious in the eyes of God, worthy of our prayer and attention.