

Fr. Martin's Reflection - September 29, 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Both Numbers 11:25-29 and Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48 deal with the theme of inclusivity and the work of God beyond established boundaries. In both passages, there is a shared concern about people performing acts of prophecy or casting out demons outside of the expected circles of authority. In response, God's attitude is open and gracious, encouraging broader participation in His work.

In Numbers 11:25-29, the context is that Moses is overwhelmed with the burden of leading the Israelites. In response, God instructs him to appoint seventy elders who would share the responsibility. These elders receive the Spirit of God and prophesy, confirming their role. However, two men, Eldad and Medad, who were not part of the seventy, also begin to prophesy. Joshua, Moses' assistant, becomes concerned and asks Moses to stop them, but Moses responds with a profound statement of humility and openness. He says, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!"

This moment highlights Moses' deep understanding of God's will. Instead of being protective of his authority or the special status of the seventy elders, Moses recognizes that God's Spirit is not confined to human structures or expectations. His desire is for all people to share in the gift of prophecy, illustrating the inclusivity of God's Spirit. The heart of leadership, Moses shows, is not about control but about facilitating the work of God wherever it appears.

Similarly, in Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48, John tells Jesus that someone outside their group was casting out demons in Jesus' name, and they tried to stop him. John's concern mirrors Joshua's in Numbers, as both are uncomfortable with someone acting with spiritual authority outside the recognized group. Jesus, however, corrects John, saying, "Do not stop him... for whoever is not against us is for us." Jesus' response, like Moses', embraces a broader understanding of God's work, teaching that His power is not limited to those within the immediate circle of disciples.

Jesus goes on to give a series of warnings about causing others to stumble and the seriousness of sin. He uses stark language, speaking of cutting off hands, feet, or plucking out eyes if they lead one to sin, emphasizing the extreme importance of avoiding actions that could prevent others from experiencing God's grace or hinder one's own spiritual journey. While these warnings may seem severe, they underscore the importance of prioritizing the kingdom of God over everything else.

In both texts, there is an emphasis on humility and inclusivity. In Numbers, Moses teaches that true leadership desires for others to share in the Spirit, while in Mark, Jesus shows that the work of God cannot be constrained to particular groups or individuals. The message is clear: the Spirit of God moves beyond human boundaries and is inclusive, welcoming all who work in God's name. Both passages challenge us to adopt a posture of humility, recognizing God's work in unexpected places and people, and to take seriously the responsibility to avoid actions that would hinder the faith of others or their own relationship with God.

Eucharistic Miracles Pilgrimage

Please know that I will be thinking and praying for you, and needs of our parish and the Diocese, as I journey to Italy on this wonderful pilgrimage. I ask that you keep us in your prayers.

Fr. Martin