

The first reading (Numbers 11:25-29) gives us the account of the institution of the 70 elders who would help Moses to rule the people of Israel. The spirit in the first reading that came upon these seventy elders was not the Holy Spirit. It was rather a charism, God's gift of prophesy. God gave these 70 elders the spirit of leadership and prophecy, just as he gave to Moses to govern his people. Joshua, an aide to Moses, resented the fact that the spirit of leadership and prophesy God gave to his boss, Moses, was given to these men also. Joshua went to the extent that he wanted Moses to stop them from prophesying. Moses refused his request: "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets! Would that the Lord might bestow his spirit on them all!" Moses knows that God's gift is for all his children and that no one has prerogative rights over God's gift. God chooses whoever he wants him/her to serve him and his people. Who are you to restrict/limit God's gifts to those he wants to give?

We also hear a similar complaint of Joshua in the Gospel reading. John is not happy that someone who does not belong to Jesus' disciples is also performing exorcism. John and his fellow disciples tried to stop this person because they felt he had no right to drive out demons in Jesus' name. John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us." Jesus used this opportunity to teach John and all his disciples that his heavenly Father's gifts are for all his children to use in his name for the building of his kingdom. He put it beautifully: "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. For whoever is not against us is for us." Jesus, like Moses, warns his disciples and all of us against jealousy and intolerance against others. We must not be threatened by the gifts or achievements of others in our community. We must rejoice in the good that others are doing and give thanks to God for using these people for doing good things. Let us learn to give compliments to those who are doing well instead of being jealous of them.

Jesus also teaches them and all of us about charity and not leading others to sin. He says, "Anyone who gives a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward." "A cup of water" implies a small kind of deed. So even a small charity that you may give to those who preach the Word of God, Jesus will surely reward you. Jesus also warns us against leading little ones, meaning insignificant members in the community who believe in him, to sin. "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea." Think of sins of neglect, abuse, bad examples, etc. some of us do to our children. Jesus went on to give us a direction to avoid dealing with temptation which must not be taken literally. He meant that we must try to avoid sin at all costs so that we will not end up in hell.

In the second reading, St. James gives strong words of warning and condemnation of wealth especially when it is obtained through exploitation of the weak. We are reminded that God will one day judge us on how we acquired our wealth and on how we used it. Let us always pray that we will always use our wealth and talent that God has blessed us with to serve him and his children, especially the poor and the needy in our community.

Next month, October, is the month of the Holy Rosary. Let us turn to Holy Mother Mary and ask her to pray for us that we will always use our blessings/gifts to serve her Son, Jesus Christ, and his church. Amen!