



26th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Mark 9: 39-43; 45; 47-48

All God's good works

The man fell over backwards, falling stiffly. He slammed into the ground so hard that dust exploded out from under him. His left leg began to kick wildly, as if he was trying to shake off an evil spirit that had slithered from the ground and seized it. His whole body began to convulse while groaning sounds and drool came from his mouth.

A wild-eyed magician jumped forward from the crowd that was gathering.. He circled the fallen man like a predator and suddenly raised his hands to the sky, shouting in a raspy voice:

“I command you evil spirits to depart... to come out of this man’s body. By the power of Jesus of Nazareth, I call you out!”

Just then the man on the ground stopped seizing and was calm. It was a miracle! Like a wink of sunlight through the clouds, an exultation flashed over the exorcist’s face revealing the beginnings of a smile. Quickly, he struggled to maintain his stern composure. The exorcist then proudly walked away, holding his head high.

Outraged, the disciple John called after him, “Magician, by what authority do you use the name of Jesus? I am one of his disciples and you are not one of our

group!”

The demon-expeller turned back, snarling at John: “You have seen my power at work. Be silent!” The fallen man was now getting up, sleepily brushing off his clothes.

Later that day, John told Jesus about the incident, “I was wishing that I had tried to stop this magician from using your name.”

Jesus said: “Do not try to stop him. No man who performs a miracle using my name can at once speak ill of me. Anyone who is not against us is with us. Any one who gives you a drink of water because you belong to Christ will not, I assure you, go without his reward. But, it would be better if anyone who leads astray one of these simple believers were to be plunged in the sea with a great millstone fastened around his neck.”



While this apparent exorcism may have been nothing more than merely allowing time for an epileptic seizure to run its course, those who witnessed it saw a magical power done in the name of Jesus by an exorcist who was not an official disciple. Jesus’ response is a lesson in appreciating that good works come in many shapes and sizes.

In less ecumenical days than we now enjoy, many Catholics did not see the openness of God’s love for all of his people—be they Muslim, Protestant or Buddhist. As President Lincoln once said: we shouldn’t worry if God is on our side, more important we should ask ourselves the question: ‘are we on God’s side?’