

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

What were Eldad and Medad doing that they missed the call to go with the other elders to the tent of meeting so that the Lord could share with them some of the spirit he had given to Moses?

Were they indisposed? Busy helping someone? Maybe the person that was supposed to tell them had a grudge with them and decided not to pass the word along. Maybe he thought that neither of them were worthy of the gift.

The only place we could look for an answer to that question is scripture, and scripture doesn't say. What scripture does indicate is that it did not matter. God is not limited by human processes. For God, it was sufficient that Moses had done his discernment, as instructed, and placed them on the list. They received the gift the same as all the others on the list did.

This can be a challenge for us. And not only from the perspective that sometimes we want to feel special, privileged, and take offence when someone else shares in the same rewards that we have received.

Have you ever been invited into the VIP section at a basketball game or other event, only to wonder whether the other people there are looking at you, asking themselves the question "Who let him in?"

Moses has to reset Joshua's perspective: It's not about privilege. It's about being ministers of God's gifts.

Jesus has to do the same thing: Why worry about who is casting out the demon? The focus really ought to be on the fact that a person is being delivered from that

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oppression and that's a good thing, right? That's what God wanted, or it would not have happened.

When I was working in formation I had to practice this sort of perspective setting a regular basis so that my biases did not dictate my actions. It seemed that every year one or another of the students would decide to grow a beard. I have to tell you, not all beards are created equal. Some grow out scraggily. No question.

The question to me was, does it matter? If the person has been called by God to the Franciscan life, then maybe the order of the day is to accommodate the vocation, even in those painful moments when a young friar is working out who he is and how he wants to be, and hope for the best.

It's really quite freeing to know that God has established the Church with its ministries and institutions, but at a more fundamental level, he has bestowed his Spirit on all the Church's members by virtue of our baptism.

We can forget that. And when we do, we might end up looking for someone else to spring into action when something needs to be done and overlook the gifts that have been given to us that could be put to work.

Strictly speaking, for example, it does not take a priest to lead the prayer before sitting down to a meal. Presiding over the Eucharist, yes. Presiding over a picnic, no.

Given the issues of failure we are dealing with in the

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Church right now, today's readings are a good reminder that the Church is the whole people of God, not just its hierarchy. The whole people of God have a role to play in the movement toward repair and reform, even if it is simply asking questions and holding accountable and remaining vigilant that needed changes do actually take place.

For that to happen all of us need to exercise the ministry that comes from baptism when we were anointed to share in the prophetic vocation of Christ along with his kingly vocation and priestly one.

It's hard for me to see that leaving the Church in disgust will do that, as understandable as that might seem. Can God be calling us, wherever we find ourselves, to be even more engaged and active so that we can move forward resolutely toward the kingdom of God where true perfection is found?