

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time – September 25/26, 2021 – Reflection

Moses' assistant, Joshua, tattles to his boss about people prophesying in the camp who hadn't been at the planning meeting ... who gave them that power? We hafta stop them!

James lashes out against the rich and powerful, and their scheming, conniving ways to get more money and cement their control over the poor.

John, the Beloved Disciple, turns snitch telling Jesus that others outside the apostolic inner circle were casting out demons in Jesus' name. What gives them the right?? Lord, you gave us that power - not them!

Power.

Growing up, I was the oldest of four children. Because I was the biggest, I could be a tease to my younger brothers and little sister. I could be bossy with them and even threaten them if they told on me. I had the power, and I used it to my advantage. Now, I'm the shortest, the oldest and most decrepit, the poorest and I ain't got no power over them anymore, and haven't for a long, long time!

Power.

In hockey, when one team is penalized for some infraction of the rules, the offending player is sent to the penalty box to sit out two or four or five or even ten minutes of play. His team must play for all that time

short-handed while the other team with the extra skater goes on the power-play, with a very good chance to score a goal against the short-handed team.

Power is at the root of all sibling rivalry.

The thirst for power is the cause of all abuse, physical and verbal.

The desire to lord it over others in a show of power is the source of taunting and bullying.

The quest for power and control leads governments to send their troops into battle to gain territory and resources and riches and subjects ... all to have more power.

In the workplace, staff jostling with one another for the ear and the favor of the boss is all about moving up the rungs of the ladder of success and having more power in the company.

Hunger for power even worms its way into the frescoed walls of the Church - junior churchmen attach themselves to the rich red and purple robes of the princes of the Church in order to one day have the power themselves and the prestige high rank in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Jesus reminds His followers that the children of this world are always grasping for more, for power. He tells us it cannot be like that with us. If we would have true power, we must serve the needs of others, we must give and not take, we must show mercy and not exact revenge.

In all the history of the Church, there have been all sorts of people who wielded the sword of power: popes and cardinals, bishops and pastors, wealthy benefactors and military crusaders. But, if you stop to

think about it, it was only the truly holy and humble who had the lasting and real power: a 32 year old nun, Catherine of Siena, who influenced popes and princes; Peter Claver, who went into the stinking holds of slave ships to minister to Africans as brothers and sisters in Christ, not as animals; a 24 year old cloistered Carmelite sister, Therese de Liseaux, who became the beloved Little Flower of the world, without ever leaving the confines of the convent; a poor little man from a little village in Italy who dressed in rags and ended his days living in a cave, blind, Francis of Assisi; another Franciscan who bled from his hands and side and feet every time he celebrated Mass, Padre Pio; a hot-tempered priest who journeyed halfway around the world to be one with the poor things afflicted with a disgusting, disfiguring disease, "my fellow lepers," he said, Father Damien of Molokai; a tiny little, wrinkled Albanian woman, who adopted India as home, as dress, and found the poorest of the poor all over the world as being something beautiful for Christ, Mother Theresa.

The power of love, the power of service, the power of mercy, the power of humility ... that is the power that will last from one generation to the next and change the world.

If you want power, real power, "Be ye holy, as your heavenly Father is holy," ... and I will raise you up, I will raise you up, I will raise you up on the last day.

Amen.