

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given on September 30, 2012
Twenty-sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time
Liturgical Year B

I have a friend from another parish. She is now 80 years old. I met her about 30 years ago, when I had just arrived in that parish. She came up to me and said, "Welcome! And don't think that funny-looking collar you wear means you're any different than we are." I thought, well, we're off to a rough start. But I discovered that she was a wise, generous woman with a tough exterior. One thing I learned from her had to do with resentment, a definition that made perfect sense. Resentment, she said, is like drinking a glass of poison yourself and expecting the other person to die.

That definition came back to me this week as I was wondering about the Gospel. How do we explain and understand the Gospel today? We don't live in a world where many exorcisms happen, except in the movies. It may be hard to understand.

The disciples say, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out a demon in Your name and tried to stop him." Jesus replies, "Why would you do that? Whoever is not against us is with us." Why would they have done that? Perhaps this exorcist was a former disciple of Jesus. Maybe he was the best of the bunch. Maybe he called out the others and they were too lazy to take the encouragement. Maybe this guy was put off because the rest of the disciples were always arguing among themselves about which one of them was the greatest disciple.

Then, when he left, they were chagrined, leaving them the victims of their own guilt – or anger – and it freezes in them, leaving them possessed by the past, possessed by their resentments.

Christ is asking us to look at these corrosive resentments, if we have them, and not so that we go looking for an exorcist on Craigslist, but so that we can turn to Christ in our resentment and ask Him to set us free.

At the Eucharist today, Christ is present in His challenging Word that offers comfort and in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, by which He sets us free to be His disciples – His disciples set free to be better disciples by His generous love for us.