

## Parish Priest's Corner

“Whoever Is Not Against Us Is For Us”

Today's reading recounts an event in the life of our ancestors in the faith as they journeyed in the desert guided by the presence of God. Seventy elders are chosen and anointed with the same divine spirit which was bestowed upon Moses. Two of these elders were not present at the actual anointing, so the others claim that they have no right to speak in God's name because of this technicality. Moses corrects Joshua. The same sentiment is echoed in today's gospel as Jesus cautions John not to judge those who are doing good in His name, but may not officially be his disciples. Jesus warns against jealousy and intolerance toward others who do not follow us.

This is a reminder that God, who is good, created each one of us and his goodness resides within each human person. We all have the potential within us to do good. The Spirit of God cares little for our human credentials when it comes to performing good deeds. Jesus cautioned his disciples about being too exclusive with who should be included in the Kingdom of God. God is pure goodness. God is generosity par excellence. He lavishes his blessings on everyone who lets him; we, as his followers, ought to do the same.

We are called to make room for each other to share their God-given goodness. The slightest or mightiest good deed done for him or for his Kingdom will not go unrewarded - even if it's only giving a glass of water to someone who is thirsty. Unfortunately, many times we, like the apostle John in this passage, are less generous than our Lord and concern ourselves with holding back the grace of God. Sometimes we refuse to give freely to others what we have freely received from God. Other times we envy the good that others are doing, as if it somehow it detracts from the good we are doing or makes us look bad. But it is not for us to limit the range of divine benevolence by our pettiness. Rather, it is for us to extend it, to encourage whatever good is being done anywhere, whether or not we get the credit.

All of us who are seeking God, the spirit of truth and goodness, are connected to the Church, whether or not we call ourselves Christians, or are officially within the Church. St. James and Jesus remind us that the rightful heirs to the kingdom of Heaven are the little ones, the poorest, the weakest, and the least respected. If we do not stand with them, we persecute the body of Christ.