

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

As many of you know, I worked at Mount Angel Seminary for eleven years before coming to St. Mary's. One of my jobs during that time was that of Admissions Officer, and as such, I got to meet with all of our prospective students as part of an Admissions Board, that engaged them in an Admissions Interview. Inevitably, one member of the board would ask the poor candidate who was being grilled by 5 or 6 administrators, "So, why do you want to be a priest?" And we usually got the usual answers about how the young man wants to serve people and the Church and how they've always had this tugging call.

I think there was one candidate who said, it was because priesthood is a necessary step before he could become Pope...I don't think we accepted him.

But I do distinctly remember one answer we got a couple of years ago from this guy, who wanted to be an Exorcist! He thought it would be cool to be consecrated, to do head to head combat with demons. Now, I'm thinking to myself, obviously, this guy never saw the 1973 movie "The Exorcist" with Linda Blair, because if you remember,that priest ends up a pile of mince meat after jumping from an upper story window.

I love being a priest, but coming face to face with such a "possession" has never been high on my priestly 'to do' list.

I mention this, because, In the Gospel today, we hear John complaining to Jesus about someone whom they saw casting out a demon in His name. This was a power that Jesus gave to his disciples

before he sent them out to preach the Gospel, but John's complaint is that the man He saw, was not one of these disciples.

How does Jesus respond?

Hey, let the guy alone, he's on our side. "For whoever is not against us is for us."

And in the first reading from Numbers, Joshua is complaining to Moses about these 2 guys, Eldad and Medad, who are prophesying. Joshua thinks they should be stopped, because they were NOT in the tent of Yahweh, with the other 70 elders, when the Lord gave some of Moses' "Spirit" to them. And, how does Moses reply? Well, somewhat similar to how Jesus did. He says,

"Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets. Would that the Lord might bestow HIS SPIRIT on them all!"

Well, guess what? Moses's wish Has Come True. At baptism, ALL of the Lord's people receive His spirit. Each of Us did.... And we were also anointed with Holy chrism, which made us not only prophets, but also Kings, and Priests of the Lord.

Too often we forget, that by virtue of our Baptism, we are all Priests, Prophets, and Kings. We are not just individual selves—we are members of the body of Christ—one in His Spirit.

As we all know, "It's Good to Be King," in fact, it's a great privilege to be all of these things, but it also comes with..... responsibilities. We DO have to combat sin and evil. We cannot be like the rich of ill-gotten wealth. If we withhold wages or persecute the ritcheous, As James says, in his letter, these will cry out to the Lord against us.

And so with the psalmist we pray, “From wanton sin especially, restrain your servant; let it NOT rule over me.

Then Shall I be blameless and innocent of serious sin.”

Jesus goes so far as to say, “if your hand causes you to sin... CUT IT OFF.” Or your foot or your eye... Cut it off... Gouge it out. Better to be maimed than to spend eternity in Hell with the Demons.

Now, hopefully, none of us will have to go to this extreme, but we are called on, by virtue of our baptism to avoid sin.

And hopefully, none of us will have to confront a possessed little girl who rotates her head and levitates, but we are all called upon to combat evil.

Let us all be strengthened by this Eucharist, and through the Spirit in US, perform mighty deeds in Jesus name. Or at least be a witness in the small things, because as Jesus says, “Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ—will surely not lose his reward.

So let’s all try to ***keep*** our hands and feetwhile bringing about.... the Kingdom of God!