

## *Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church*

Twenty-Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time

September 27, 2009

Readings:

Numbers 11:25-29

James 5:1-6

Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

The disciples were disturbed when they came upon someone who is using Jesus' name—and hence his authority—to cast out demons. They did their best to put a stop to his activity because, as they explain, “he was not one of us.” Instead of approval, what they get from Jesus is a mild rebuke. He does not mind his name being used by another for a good purpose. The main thing is that, through whatever instrument, human beings are being set free from the power of Satan and reclaimed for the fullness of life. The disciples, on the other hand, are less focused upon the good being done and more concerned about an outsider's use of what they see as their own possession.

The first reading offers a helpful biblical precedent for this part of the Gospel. It tells of a similar misguided response on the part of Joshua when two individuals who were appointed were outsiders. Such outsiders show the kind of service to others that is supposed to be a hallmark of the followers of Jesus. What determines the “reward” one will receive is not whether one is inside or outside the community but whether one has performed the service that is expected. Taken together, both elements of instruction on the part of Jesus show a remarkable openness to the possibility of goodness and effective ministry outside the community of disciples.

They invite the disciples to look away from their own sense of distinctiveness and privilege and to be prepared to find and rejoice in goodness wherever it exists. This is not to play down the importance of being associates of Jesus. It is simply to insist that what is most important about such belonging is preparedness for costly service rather than resting in power and privilege. There is much that goes on in the world, outside our own personal worlds, that is good and life giving. There are so many ways that the Lord's work is being accomplished. Jesus is asking us, as he asked the disciples, to open our eyes and to see new possibilities and new opportunities. He is asking us, to consider, that salvation may come in ways that we don't expect.