

26<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time Year “B”

September 26-27, 2015

Readings: Numbers 11:25-29; James 5:1-6; Mark 9: 38-43, 45-48

I feel sorry for Moses, and I do not think I am alone in that sentiment. If you consider this morning’s first reading, it certainly did not take long for his “honeymoon” to be over! It was only three days after setting out from Mount Sinai, when “the people complained bitterly in the hearing of the LORD.”<sup>1</sup> They blamed Moses for bringing them out of Egypt, where at least they had fish, melons, and onions to eat. Here in the desert, they had none of these things– only the monotonous manna! Needless to say, Moses felt overwhelmed.

So God heard his plea and told him to select seventy elders, experienced men from the various tribes, inviting Moses to give them a share of the spirit of Moses. This must have been a humbling experience. For now, they were to share in the burdens of the office, to share the difficulties as well as the joys of leading the people of God into the Promised Land.

Yet the story only begins there for the Israelites, and for us as well today. You see, pride, greed and jealousy enter into the picture. Two men who were not part of the original seventy had received the spirit of God and began to prophesy. Joshua, who would succeed Moses as the leader of the nation, objected. He wanted Moses to stop them from speaking in God’s name, but Moses would not– the more people with the spirit the better!

In its most typical meaning, jealousy is resentment or ill will towards another because of some good that he or she enjoys. No matter how many times we hear the passage from Scripture quoted about the one Spirit and the many gifts, we so often pay to it only lip service. In reality, we tend towards hoarding those gifts for ourselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Number 11:1

Think of jealousy this way- at its core, we are saying to God that He made a mistake. And we have the audacity to remind God that the gift He has freely chosen to give to another, really ought to be ours!

Closely related to jealousy is envy, though slightly different. Envy is a form of sadness. We are in fact saddened by the goodness of someone else. We resent their gifts, and our response is fundamentally opposed to joy. Our Holy Father is teaching each one of us to be animated by joy. How can the fact that God has been generous to someone else fill our hearts with sadness? But that is exactly what can happen.

As long as jealousy and envy reign in our hearts, we will never be fully able to accept God's unconditional love, and the Gospel will go neglected. We will never be able to preach a Gospel of love, while hatred in any of its forms rules our own life.

God knows what he is doing. If he did not give us a particular gift or talent, we ought seriously consider that he must have thought that we did not need it in order to achieve holiness. Perhaps even the presence of that talent would have hindered us from living the Gospel mandate by enabling us to focus too much upon ourselves.

I spent much of this week with a live stream window in the upper left hand corner of my computer screen, watching the events of the Holy Father's Apostolic visit unfold. He spent the week strengthening and confirming in us the gift of our faith and of our families. He knows the challenges of family life, as he speaks so personally to each of us.

Jealousy can threaten families too, especially when it takes the form of petty jealousy within the family, amongst siblings, young or old for that matter. Let us pray to wholeheartedly embrace the joys and struggles of family life; let us pray most assiduously for all families, invoking the strength and protection of the Holy Family of Jesus Mary and Joseph.