

# TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #137

READING I Numbers 11:25-29

A reading from the Book of Numbers

The LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses.

Taking some of the spirit that was on Moses,

and as the spirit came to rest on them, they prophesied.

Now two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad,

were not in the gathering but had been left in the camp.

They too had been on the list, but had not gone out to the tent;

yet the spirit came to rest on them also,

and they prophesied in the camp.

So, when a young man quickly told Moses,

“Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp,”

Joshua, son of Nun, who from his youth had been

Moses’ aide, said,

“Moses, my lord, stop them.”

But Moses answered him,

“Are you jealous for my sake?

Would that all the people of the LORD were prophets!

Would that the LORD might bestow his spirit on them all!”

The mention of the cloud indicates God’s presence.

prophecy = PROF-uh-si

Eldad = EL-dad

Medad = MEE-dad

God’s revelation is not limited to a specific site. Where do we see God working outside of the “box” we might place him in?

Emphasize “stop them” to convey how frantic the situation is.

Ask the question gently. If the tent

of divine encounter, it was natural that the alternative location was suspect.

Moses sets them straight.

## READING I

As the Israelite people began their journey away from the wilderness of Sinai and toward the promised land, Moses, with the aid of Joshua, led them. They had witnessed God descending on the mountain and had received the law. Now, as Numbers recounts, the Lord dispersed the prophetic spirit, which had been imparted on Moses, to seventy elders among the Israelites. Interestingly, despite the fact that in previous chapters in the Book of Numbers lengthily concerns over protocols and procedures for the people to follow are articulated for the people to follow are articulated

lated, this scene constitutes a procedural missstep. Two elders are left in the camp while the others join Moses and Joshua outside the camp to engage in uttering prophecies. Still more interesting, the Lord acts among the people despite their procedural missstep and no harm is incurred because of it. Quite the contrary, in fact, Moses rebukes Joshua for wanting to stop the out-of-place elders turned prophets. For Moses, the event is bolstering the relationship between God and the people, while for Joshua, Moses’ unique position within the community needs defending. Yet, unlike Joshua, Moses knows the role and responsibility of the prophetic endeavor very well at this point, and he sees the Lord’s dispersion of the prophetic spirit on two elders within the camp as a glimmer of an unrealized ideal in which all the people might be the Lord’s prophets. Thus, far from being a detrimental intrac-tion of some divine law, the two wayward elders prophesying in the camp become icons of an ideal to be looked for in the future: the Lord’s people prophesying (that is, sharing the Lord’s message) in the world.

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 19:8, 10, 12-13, 14 (9a)

R. The precepts of the Lord give joy to the heart.  
 very diligent in keeping them,  
 yet who can detect failings?  
 Cleanse me from my unknown faults!  
 From wanton sin especially, restrain  
 your servant;  
 let it not rule over me.  
 Then shall I be blameless and innocent  
 of serious sin.  
 Though your servant is careful of them,  
 all of them just.

Rather than using an accusatory tone  
 against the rich, use a tone that helps the  
 assembly learn a lesson about the way  
 wealth (monetary or otherwise) can be  
 fleeting and can negatively impact others  
 depending on the way it is gained or used.  
 This is hyperbole; gold and silver do not rust.

The text now moves from personal greed  
 to the impact greed has on others.

Think beyond monetary wealth; what is it  
 that you are rich in that might be having  
 a negative impact upon your relationship  
 with God?

READING II James 5:1-6

A reading from the Letter of Saint James

Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your  
 impending miseries.  
 Your wealth has rotted away, your clothes have become  
 moth-eaten,  
 your gold and silver have corroded,  
 and that corrosion will be a testimony against you;  
 it will devour your flesh like a fire.  
 You have stored up treasure for the last days.  
 Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers  
 who harvested your fields are crying aloud,  
 and the cries of the harvesters  
 have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.  
 You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure;  
 you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter.  
 You have condemned,  
 you have murdered the righteous one;  
 he offers you no resistance.

READING II

When James vehemently  
 scolds "rich people" in  
 today's second reading, it can be tempting  
 to think that his audience is a wayward  
 group of Christians who have become overly  
 interested in acquiring wealth through  
 james' reprimand and condemnation of the  
 rich is best understood as a prophetic ora-  
 cle aimed at figures who, if not enemies,  
 were at least hostile toward the early  
 Christian community. James' message for  
 elders, was coming to rest on the Christian  
 community. As in the days of old, God was  
 at work amid his people strengthening  
 them for their sojourn in a new wilderness  
 of oppression.

in their dealings with unjust employers,  
 they probably associated with the rich-  
 teous one who was condemned and mur-  
 dered by the "rich people." Accordingly,  
 covetous hoarding of wealth would receive  
 their communique from God. And so it is  
 that prophetic messages like that of James  
 indicated that the prophetic spirit, which  
 first rested on Moses and the seventy  
 Christian community. As in the days of old, God was  
 at work amid his people strengthening  
 them for their sojourn in a new wilderness  
 of oppression.  
 What is more, through his words, the  
 against economic inequity and injustice,  
 prophet who spoke (and wrote) boldly

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

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

At that time, John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us." Jesus replied, "Do not prevent him. There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me. For whoever is not against us is for us. Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward. "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than with two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life crippled than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."

examples of strident supporters who, attempting to support and protect their master's work and reputation, unwittingly undermine his mission. Recalling that jealousy means protecting what rightly belongs to someone, the jealousy of these men goes too far. They are overly protective because of their zeal for their master. To match this zeal, Jesus hyperbolically counters—it would be better to be sent to the bottom of the sea or chopped apart if one's zeal for the Lord hinders the belief and discipleship of another. Jesus does not wish harm on any of his disciples, nor does he mean to prescribe such behavior among his followers. Rather, he makes his point in a rhetorical register that can disrupt and clarify his disciple's confusion. Putting his lesson in a positive, less exaggerated way, he states simply, "whoever is not against us is for us." Put differently, when following Jesus brings divergent claims and forces together, the Lord calls for discernment and recognition that non-cally counters—it would be better to be sent to the bottom of the sea or chopped apart if one's zeal for the Lord hinders the belief and discipleship of another. Jesus does not wish harm on any of his disciples, nor does he mean to prescribe such behavior among his followers. Rather, he makes his point in a rhetorical register that can disrupt and clarify his disciple's confusion. Putting his lesson in a positive, less exaggerated way, he states simply, "whoever is not against us is for us." Put differently, when following Jesus brings divergent claims and forces together, the Lord calls for discernment and recognition that non-cally counters—it would be better to be sent to the bottom of the sea or chopped apart if one's zeal for the Lord hinders the belief and discipleship of another. Jesus does not wish harm on any of his disciples,

GOSPEL

With exaggerated (hyper-bolic) rhetoric, Jesus drives home a lesson for his disciples in today's Gospel: do not hinder supporters, regardless of where they appear. The passage begins with John reporting to Jesus that someone was driving out demons in Jesus' name and that he tried to stop the individual. With this scene in mind, we recall Joshua's complaint to Moses in today's first reading from Numbers and Peter's resistance to Jesus' impending suffering in the Gospel passage from two weeks ago. In John, Joshua, and Peter we encounter

Gehenna = geh-hEN-nah  
The graphic nature of eternal punishment is haunting. Read solemnly.

Jesus uses hyperbole to indicate the seriousness of the eternal consequences of our actions.

This is not a threat, but a warning. Read with firmness.

Unlike the first reading, where the reader is told that God's spirit descends upon the two who were not at the tent, we do not know if God's presence is with this "someone" here. However, Jesus knows the hearts of all.

Use a slightly accusatory tone.