

(Food for thought: Gospel: Mark 9: 38-43,45, 47-48.)



## “The Inner Circle”

One of the hardest things to overcome in human nature is the tendency to categorize people between those who are "in" and those who are "out." We all want to be accepted by our own inner circle of family and friends, and exclusion by contemporaries can be painful and even damaging. People derive a sense of self worth and a way of exerting power over others by belonging to a group that, in their own eyes, seems to be better than others. To maintain acceptance we may even keep silent when we should object to unkind behavior or conversation by our peers.

In today's Gospel, John complains to Jesus that a man who was not one of

their inner circle was performing powerful acts in Jesus' name. It's almost as if John is hoping Jesus to tell this man to stop his good works. The disciples seem to think they are the privileged few, the distinguished recipients of Jesus' mission. But as close as they may be to Jesus, the disciples are still totally off the mark.

Jesus' answer is not what they expect. He simply says: "...whoever is not against us is for us." That is a rather broad statement, and a rather positive one, when we stop to think about it. We generally tend to reverse that statement into the negative or make it adversarial: "He who is not with us is against us." So, the bottom line for Jesus is how people behave towards those in need.

No individual can claim a special and restricted privilege over Jesus' mission.

God's Spirit is quite capable of expressing itself in works of love by all kinds of people. Jesus says the true sign of discipleship is how we love and care for others.



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