

[Numbers 11:25-29; Psalm 19; James 5:1-6; Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48]

Blanche and her friends had been in charge of the Mothers' Club at their parish for years. They'd hosted lots of events, raised a lot of money for the religious education program, and had a lot of fun. Lately, though, it seemed the younger mothers were not getting involved, and a good amount of their meeting was spent griping that the same old people were doing all the work.

Then a new family moved into the neighborhood and Cindy, the wife, had a lot of ideas. A few women on her block got caught up in her enthusiasm, and soon they planned a Halloween event for parents and their children. They made one tactical mistake, however. They didn't get the approval of the Mothers' Club or from Blanche first.

What made things worse was that when the day of the Halloween festival came, the event was a huge success. Blanche and her friends were livid. They went to the pastor to complain. He kindly asked why they were so upset. He helped them realize the newcomer was only trying to do her part to help the community, and he made a plan to invite both groups to lunch at the rectory to share some parish history, exchange new ideas, and get to know one another. As Jesus said in this Sunday's reading, "Whoever is not against us is for us."

Moses' assistant Joshua was a pretty reliable foot soldier through those long years in the desert, but he nearly wiggled out when Eldad and Medad started prophesying. The spirit of prophecy had been given to the 70 elders who had gathered outside the camp with Moses according to God's design. Joshua thoroughly approved of that, because the power was bestowed through the proper channels. But Eldad and Medad, who were on the original list, had not gone out to the Tent of God's Presence and therefore didn't qualify for the great prophecy sound-off. "Moses, my lord," Joshua implores respectfully, "stop them!"

Moses calls Joshua's response what it was: the spirit of jealousy. Joshua was jealous for Moses' sake (and for his own maybe by extension). Joshua didn't want the authority of his leader to be shaken by what appeared to be a rival source of power in the camp.

But Moses, secure in the Lord he served, was not at all threatened by this unforeseen development. "Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets!" he exclaims. If proclaiming the Word of the Lord was a good thing, then how could it be bad if more people were doing it? By dismissing Joshua's concern, Moses shows that the gift of prophecy belonged to God and not to Moses himself. What God did with the divine gifts was God's business and not his.

Jesus soothes his frazzled disciples after they saw a person clearly not of their company driving out demons in Jesus' name. "Whoever is not against us is for us," He points out calmly. Those who deceive others with lies will pay the penalty of corrupting the innocent, so we needn't be jealous on God's account: Justice will be served. But the good news is, there is more truth going around than we may be aware of.

In today's Second Reading, St. James speaks truth to power, and truth to wealth. The words are not pretty, but they convict the guilty. We need to hear the truth. And sometimes, hearing the truth is painful.

There is a deep and dramatic search for truth today, in our Church, in our country, even in Washington, D. C.!

The bottom line is that truth belongs to God, like any other spiritual reality, and it is up to God where it may be found. If more people have access to the truth than just our group, isn't that cause for rejoicing? Only the spirit of jealousy insists on copyrighting and controlling a gift so precious and so obviously good.

Creation is a commonwealth of sorts. God intended the goods of the world to be shared among all. The catechism insists upon a "universal destination of goods" that arises from God's love for all creatures and not just a select few. Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the precious gifts of truth, goodness and beauty as being the three ways to get closer to God. Which means that lies, evil and ugliness move us further away from God and the life of grace. We can presume that truth is among those things God delights in sharing across the board, for which the proper response on our part can only be gratitude. AMEN!