

What is needed to be a true leader

c-b-26th Sunday of OT 2018

In the first reading we get an insight into the work of being a leader.

Up until that point Moses was making all the decisions.

Every Tom, Dick and Harry were coming to him, for a ruling on some sort of dispute.

Being the only person in the whole nation doing this...

well it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that Moses' life is insanely busy...

so God instructs him to choose 72 people to help him.

Two of those 72, don't make it blessing celebration, but are still prophesying in the camp...

and Joshua lets Moses know what is happening, and asks him to stop them.

When Moses says, "leave Eldad and Medad alone,

what he is really doing

is acknowledging all the gifts and talents that God has given to those two individuals...

in other words don't stifle their enthusiasm...encourage them...

would that all God's people would freely use the gifts and talents that God has given them.

The mark of a good pastor is not to know how many ministries he is able to balance.

The mark of a good pastor is to give the people around him

the tools they need to develop their own ministry.

Moses came to the realization that he could not do everything

and commissioned 70 people to help him.

Jesus knew he could not do it on his own

and commissioned 12 people to help him.

If we do not empower the people around us to use their gifts and talents,

the very gifts and talents that they were given to them at their respective baptisms,

nothing will happen.

But when we allow those people the freedom to use their gifts and talents, we change the world.

Now I know that some peoples will not allow anything to happen

unless they have some sort of control over what is happening.

But I would ask you to review what is happening in the first readings and the gospel.

In the first reading Moses says,

"Leave them alone...would that all God's people would freely use the gifts and talents that God has given them."

In the gospel the disciples bring it to Jesus' attention that someone is casting out demons in his name that is not part of our group.

We tried to stop him but he kept going.

Back up—a bit—remember in Jesus' time

it was common knowledge that only God could cast out demons.

For that individual to be able to cast out demons,

he has to have the power of God within him.

Jesus corrects them and says

“Do not stop him, because he is not following us...

for no one can do a deed of power in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me.

It was only last week that we read about the disciples arguing about who was the greatest.

This week the disciples see someone casting out demons in Jesus' name

and they immediately perceive it as a threat.

They are acting as if their ministry is a turf war,

and they need to protect their turf against all invaders.

This competition for greatness goes against the very grain of what it means to build the kingdom.

In their closed vision they fail to see the ones from whom the demons were cast out.

The fact that the work of the kingdom has been done

and humanity has been freed from bondage

does not enter their thought process.

They have become a tightly-knit group seeking out power...hence, who is the greatest.

It was not that long ago that we...as a Church...we held firm to this limited view of ministry...

only if you were part of the Catholic Church did you have any hope of salvation.

Thankfully our eyes have been opened.

There are a great many Christian denominations that are doing God's work,

and in some cases—better than the Catholic Church.

We need to remember that God's choice of who is going to do ministry

is not a personal privilege to be guarded,

but a call to serve his people, and as such God bestows his gifts freely.

Our responsibility is to welcome those gifts wherever they appear.

The story in the first reading demonstrates the struggle that existed, and still exists,

between the authority exercised by the leaders

whose roles had been incorporated into the religious structure that has evolved over time,

and those charismatic individuals who had not been institutionally appointed

and ministered outside the centers of power.

Both Moses and Jesus were quite clear—t

he work of God took precedence over the institutional ordering of the community.

It is interesting to note.

Jesus' first priority has always been...and always will be, the Kingdom of God.

He does not limit inclusion in the kingdom of God to their group,

nor even to their religion...

it includes all those who offer hospitality and perform small tasks.

Remember what Jesus says in other parts of the gospel,

“Not everyone who says, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven,

but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.” (Mt 7:21)

Jesus is more concerned with the will of his Father being done,

than he is with who is actually doing the work.

We need to recognize talents wherever they are, even if they are not in our own Church.

I remember seeing a poster that read.

An ideal Christian would have the

- The exuberance of the Pentecostals
- Singing ability of the Lutherans
- Social Justice mindedness of the Salvation Army
- The mysticism of the Orthodox
- The inclusion of the United
- The tradition of the Catholics
- The hospitality of the Evangelicals
- The family values of the Mormons
- The missionary zeal of the Jehovah witnesses
- The work ethic of the Mennonites
- The generosity of the Anglicans
- And the love of the earth of our Indigenous brothers and sisters

Only when we see, and recognize the gifts and talents that God has given to the people around us
(pause) and rejoice in them...are we enriched...

Can the Kingdom of God can truly flourish.