

26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Mark 9:38-48  
September 26, 2021  
Submitted by Dr. Rosemary Murphy

## *Oh My, the Indignity!*

Every summer a Catholic institution with a large athletic field rented the area to a non-profit for a special Olympics event for disabled adults. And, every year someone would call to complain about the “outsiders” use of the field. The institution’s beloved maintenance supervisor was the designated complaint department. When calls came in asking how the church could permit this grievous intrusion his response was memorable, “Well,” he would say, “we’re all serving one God.” Putting down the phone with a shake of his head he would sigh, “Oh my, the indignity.” The staff who overheard him clearly recognized the silliness of the caller’s objections.

The strange exorcist in today’s Gospel who healed in the name of Jesus also prompted some indignant questions from the Twelve. John voiced their concerns, “We saw someone driving out demons in your name. We tried to prevent him because he does not follow us.” (Mark 9:38) Jesus’ response is his great homily on inclusivity. Whoever does mighty works of mercy in Jesus’ name “is not against us is for us.” (9:40) Jesus power transcends the Twelve.

In trying to help his chosen ones understand what it really means to be a disciple, Jesus makes the following points:

- His power is inclusive; it is not confined to one group.
- Persons who do good works “in my name” share Jesus’ power.
- Jesus’ power is present in the most insignificant among us, “the little ones” (whom we dare not scandalize).
- Our power to do good and bring about the kingdom of God is found in humble service to others.

As we reflect on today’s Gospel, we find there are some ways we here at All Saints can recognize Jesus’ presence in the “little ones” who have no power, wealth or status. In our ministries there are no “worthy poor” or “unworthy poor.” You don’t have to be a somebody to serve on our commissions; nobodies have gifts for service. People who look strange or different can be Eucharistic ministers equally with those we judge to be “normal.” We are disciples who take to heart Jesus’ strong caution against exclusivity and judging others as outsiders. Strange exorcists are welcome here.

Dr. Rosemary Murphy