

Would That All The People of the Lord Were Prophets!
Father Frank Matera
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God's ways are not our ways; and our ways are not God's ways. We may think that we know how God acts in our lives, but God's ways are always new and surprising. Today's readings illustrate what I mean. In the first, God pours out a portion of his Spirit upon seventy elders designated to help Moses. Filled with God's Spirit, the seventy prophesy. But when Joshua finds two men filled with the Spirit, who were not among the seventy, he protests, "Moses, my lord, stop them." Thinking that he knows God's ways, the young Joshua wants Moses to limit the gift of the Spirit. But Moses knows that God's ways are mysterious, and he responds, "*Would that all the people of the Lord were prophets!*" Moses refuses to limit the Spirit to a chosen few; for he anticipates a day when *all* of God's people will be filled with the Spirit.

Something similar happens in today's Gospel. John sees someone driving out demons in Jesus' name, and he tries to prevent him *because he does not follow us*. Like the young Joshua, John wants to limit the circle of those who minister in the name of the Lord. But Jesus, like Moses, knows that the Spirit moves where it wills; for there is no limiting the power of God's Spirit.

The task of ministry is not reserved to a few, nor does the Spirit of God rest on only a few. The task of ministry belongs to everyone who has been baptized into Christ, and the gift of the Spirit belongs to everyone who shares in this Eucharistic table. This is why Saint Paul describes the church as the body of Christ in which every member, without exception, plays a vital role. To be sure, we do not possess the same gifts, but each of us has been given a gift for building up the community of church. All of us have been anointed with God's Spirit; all of us are members of Christ's body; all of us are called to minister in the community of the saints.

This weekend, our parish council has organized a stewardship fair to remind us of the many ministries in our parish and invite us to participate in them. This invitation to ministry is vital if we hope to renew contemporary Catholicism; for if we are not involved in the work of ministry, we will not reach out to others.

Imagine a body in which only some of the members functioned properly. Imagine a body in which the arms or the legs did not move. We would view such a body as sick and infirm. Now imagine a community of believers in which some of the members are involved in the work of ministry and others are not. Such a community is a body that is not functioning to its full capacity. Such a community is weaker because not all of its members are involved in the work of ministry.

We Catholics have not reflected enough on the church as the Body of Christ in which each one of us, without exception, is active in the work of ministry. But that is how we must think of the church if we hope to renew contemporary Catholicism.

The Stewardship Cards in your pew list the many ministries already being carried out at St. Mary's: liturgical and music ministries, adult formation, evangelization, community enrichment, various forms of Christian formation, parish ministry, social outreach, and sacramental preparation. Visit the Stewardship Fair and see if there is some way in which you can participate in the work of ministry at St. Mary's. Even if you cannot become involved at this time, come to the Fair and return your card there or at Mass next week.

In a few moments, we will receive the Eucharist and enter into the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. As we do, we will hear these words: You O Lord have "called us to be a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for your own possession to proclaim everywhere your mighty works." As we receive the Eucharist we ask for the grace to become the living and vibrant Body of Christ in which each of us plays our role. We ask for the grace to be God's priestly people.