

Wednesday's Gospel: He Wasn't Following Us

Gospel for Wednesday in the
7th Week of Ordinary Time, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Mk* 9:38-40)

John said to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he was not following us.”

But Jesus said, “Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us.”

Commentary

Jesus soon gave his disciples the power to heal the sick and cast out demons. The disciples would have been surprised to see the Master carrying out these signs. But they were even more amazed that they too were able to do these things and that even the demons were subject to them in his Name (cf. *Lk* 10:17). Our Lord anticipated, in a certain sense, the effectiveness that he was going to grant to his Church throughout time, as a participant and dispenser of his triumph over evil.

Today's Gospel passage tells us that John and several other disciples witnessed how someone not from their group was also carrying out the same signs. With a poorly understood authority, they prohibited it.

Those zealous disciples had been given possession of what were only gifts, and judged others unworthy to receive them as well. They at least had the sincerity to tell the Master what had happened. Jesus' correction was rapid, as was the lesson he wanted to impart: "no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me."

We can all have a certain tendency to look askance at those who do not belong to our own group, who are not familiar or close to us – those who do things differently or with another spirit. This is what happened to the disciples. Jesus teaches us to foster an open, welcoming, universal mentality.

The scene invites us "to not oppose good, no matter where it comes from" (Bede, *in Marcum* 3,39): to not prevent others from carrying out

good works, precisely because with them they already have something in common with us, even if they are not from our group, family or charism. On the other hand, it makes no sense to undervalue what is one's own or want to change it, because of seeing the apparent spiritual success of others.

Saint Josemaría said in this regard: “Rejoice, when you see others working in good apostolic activities. And ask God to grant them abundant grace and that they may respond to that grace. Then, you, follow your way: be convinced that it's the only way for you” (*The Way*, no. 965).

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