

## **Do You Have a License for that Spirit?**

**Intro.** To drive a car, a license is required, to show proper training in operating the vehicle and knowledge of the laws. To be an electrician, plumber, firefighter, deputy or nurse you need certification to show proof of training. In the gospel, John thought only those “in the club” of apostles should be allowed to cast out demons. In effect, he wanted to see their license for that Spirit.

**I.** John’s objection seems to be about protecting the Lord from unknown imitators. He reported the incident as if he were doing a great service. But there could be a hint of jealousy on John’s part. The Lord pointed out the illogic in stopping someone for doing a good thing simply because “he does not follow us.” Maybe the disciples had begun to see themselves as a select group, apart from the rest of

people. That can be dangerous. Look to the scribes, chief priests and elders of that time. Most of them probably started out with good and holy intentions. But the more they lived differently than the rest of the society, the more they lost the understanding of service to the community.

In the reading from the book of Numbers, Moses was faced with a similar objection by one of his disciples. His response, “Would that **all** God’s people were prophets!” showed he wished that were true. Maybe he wouldn’t have had to work so hard to guide the Israelites in the desert.

**Concl.** It is natural to want to make sure that the person who comes to our homes to fix the plumbing or electric or takes care of us in the hospital is qualified to do so. We want things done right especially if we are paying for it. And it is right that

those who have spent time and money training to get certified be paid fairly. The objection by disciples in the first reading and the gospel about the Spirit given so freely to others seems to come from a concern for a loss of authority. Certain persons weren't on the list, weren't in the "club". The Lord's response was similar to Moses': "Whoever is *not against* us is *for* us." Just because someone doesn't look like us or talk like us, doesn't mean they can't do good things. The reality that Vatican Council II reminded us of is that the *people of God are the church*. God's gifts, including the Spirit, are not reserved for a select few, but for **all** his people. For some ministries, training is certainly a wise practice. We want to know that those who minister in God's name or the community's name, have some knowledge of what they are doing, whether teaching our Catholic faith

and traditions to our children or explaining the scriptures. But the "license" for this is our **Baptism! Confirmation** is a *booster shot* in which we receive the Spirit of God to witness boldly in word and deed for the Lord. Some people receive the gift for speaking and teaching; others prophecy; and some even healing. The Spirit is given to whomever **God** decides, not humans. It is up to us to *find* our gift and use it for the Lord.

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