

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“Teacher, we saw someone trying to drive out demons in your name,
and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us.”

Mark 9: 38

Last week we put out a call for some help in assembling bookshelves for the parish Reading Room/Library. Several of you stepped up and the bookshelves have been assembled. I am grateful. Knowledge, expertise, skill, time and willingness were all necessary parts of that little project to be brought to completion. Those who volunteered had these skills and qualities. They got the job done. They had a “Can-do” spirit.

We human beings do things like that all the time. However, I know that I too have a set of skills which don’t include the assembling of bookshelves. I knew this. I did not volunteer to be part of the project. We have this sense in us about the skills and expertise we do and do not have. We live in this knowledge. We are actually pretty comfortable in such a world.

Now, when it comes to the spiritual world many sense that while the need for help may be real, their personal expertise or knowledge or skill or experience in doing so might be lacking a great deal. That is not a “Can do” spirit. That is a “Do not have” spirit. But that is a world in which I am trained and have ministered for many years. I am not reticent about stepping forward in such situations to be of assistance. And yet, even though I have heard confessions for many years and anointed hundreds if not thousands of people, I also draw a line about “driving out demons.” That needs someone with more skills, experience and knowledge than I.

Or does it? What if the Lord is saying to me: “Stephen, you cannot cast out demons by your own power, of course. But by the power of the Holy Spirit? Well, someone must exercise that same power I exercised when I walked the face of the earth. After all, I have left this great and much needed spiritual power to my Church.” But because I did not think that this was a power I could use or had access to, I did not exercise it. Until very recently. To pray for the deliverance from binding spirits in the name of Jesus? “Lord I am beginning to believe that this is something you have placed on my heart, a spiritual power you desire me to exercise in your name. Lord I am beginning to recognize that You are now beginning to send different people asking for me to pray deliverance over them or to cast out unclean spirits. And so I pray and so I anoint. Who knew? And that is the question of the week.