

Dear Brothers and Sisters



*"Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow us."*

*Jesus replied, 'Do not prevent him. There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me.'*

Last weekend I was in the UK for the wedding of my nephew, James and his bride Stacey. Before travelling for that joyous occasion, many of the preceding weeks were taken up with the abuse scandal that has rocked the Church.

Part of our response as a parish community were two open forums that we had after Mass. These meetings were extraordinary. The fact that, in the middle of the summer, one hundred and fifty people took the time to attend the forums, giving up two hours of their Sunday afternoon was surprising enough.

But what really surprised and edified me was to see the way demons were being driven out.

In today's Gospel, Jesus' disciples complain that someone who was not 'one of them' was acting in his name. They thought they had the monopoly on doing good and rooting out evil. They wanted to close ranks and safeguard their perceived power, that power and influence which comes from being closely associated with Jesus.

But Jesus was having none of it, and called them out on their hypocrisy. He says to his disciples: 'Are we not in the business of doing good? Is not my mission that of leading souls to heaven? Then who cares if someone is helping towards that goal? If someone is helping us they should be thanked, and not silenced.'

The words of this Gospel passage were played out this summer. The Attorney General of Pennsylvania and his Grand Jury had been trying to drive out demons for two years. Instead of helping him, Jesus disciples threw up road blocks. Even when his 800-page report was released, it was redacted because Jesus disciples did not like what it said.

In contrast, I witnessed the spirit of prophecy in our parish community this summer. I thank all who attended the forums, and signed the letter that was addressed to Cardinal Tobin. When I handed him that letter, the Cardinal thanked me. He said most parishes did not have the courage to do such a forum.

At Baptism we were all anointed as prophets. You have the gift of prophecy, that is, the capacity to discern what is right from what is wrong. As a prophet you are an essential member of the Body of Christ, the Church. Thank you for exercising your gift of prophecy this summer.

Fr. Sean