

**Mass for the Dedication of the Father Michael J. Larkin Center  
Prince of Peace Catholic Church, Jacksonville  
September 30, 2012**

**Texts: Nm 11, 25-29; Jas 5: 1-6; Mk 9:38-43, 45, 47-48**

A great Irish professor from the Seminary of St. Vincent de Paul\*, Boynton Beach would often tell his students: your opinion is like touching an elephant – you perceive only “a part” of the elephant. The elephant is far greater than what you see! That explains why the need for a constant openness to learn, to dialogue, to explore in search of the truth. As St. Augustine said, the thirst for the truth makes us permanent seekers...

Moses is a great leader of faith. From his spirit – he enables 70 elders to share his spiritual gifts received from the Lord. In today’s passage, he’s told: stop Meda and Eldah for they are also prophesying. Stop them! Wise Moses responds – I wish all the people would be prophets! Moses reflects God’s image: this God who “makes his sun raise on the bad and on the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.” (Mt. 5, 45)

Above all, Jesus who is called Rabboni – teacher – saw the potential in others – to a fisherman →He invites him to become fisher of men; to Zacchaeus – who said, maybe I can see Jesus from the top of a tree →He cries to him: Come down, let us have a meal at your home. Ignatius of Loyola put into words this constant manner of Christ acting for greater benefits as, **semper major** (always greater). Jesus who always sees beyond the immediate tells his disciples: Do not prevent him...for whoever is not against us is for us. (Mk.9, 39.40) For whoever is not against us is for us.

We need healing of our own prejudices, judgmental attitudes in order to practice that love, which is magnanimous. For example, Father Larkin, opened the rectory to Father Colange, opened his home to welcome the other; He opened the parish to the Haitians, to their music, to their language, to their different sense of time. By embracing diversity, he reflected the priestly anointed heart; he reflected the immense heart of Christ. It is the shepherd’s love that reaches out to the large number of elders and the sick that are visited and cared with meticulous fidelity.

John Paul II wrote in *Novo Millennio Ineunte* #43 about the *Spirituality of Communio*. In its core, it is the realization that the Trinity abides in me but it is also in others. The other is a gift to me. This spirituality enables us to make room for our brothers and sisters bearing each other’s burdens. This practice of Eucharistic love in action says no to competition, distrust or jealousy.

I thank today Father Larkin because to those couples for whose pregnancy is a problem, Father Larkin would persuade them to see rather a precious gift – a child. Many have heard him say: Give me the babies. I rejoice that the Providence of God placed him for forty years in this neighborhood where this witness is more important than ever.

How opportune, how good that this Mass celebrates the life of a priest, a pastor, who loves his people, who loves pastoral care! Like the Cure of Ars, the faithful of Prince of Peace can say: this priest is a gift of the Sacred Heart to us: how wonderful it is to recognize today this shepherd of souls for the sake of generations to come.

Jesus Christ the Great exemplary Shepherd – the only Shepherd – redeemed us all by the sacrifice of the Cross. But even after death this supreme Shepherd was still giving as water and blood were streaming from his wounded side – the new Eve was being born from his side to provide us a banquet of love manifested in the sacraments of salvation.

\*Msgr. James Murtagh