

In the readings from **Numbers 11:25-29** and **Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48**, there is a profound typology that illustrates God's expansive and inclusive work through both Old and New Testament hierarchies. The typology reveals a divine pattern of calling and empowering individuals to work within God's plan, but it also challenges human expectations about who is worthy of this calling.

Old Testament Typology: Numbers 11:25-29

In **Numbers 11**, Moses faces the overwhelming task of leading the people of Israel through the wilderness. In response, God commands Moses to gather seventy elders, upon whom He will bestow some of the Spirit that is upon Moses, allowing them to share in the burden of leadership (Num. 11:16-17). When the Spirit comes upon these seventy elders, they prophesy. However, two men, **Eldad** and **Medad**, who were not part of the official gathering, also begin to prophesy in the camp. Joshua, Moses' aide, asks Moses to stop them, but Moses replies with a generous spirit: **“Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!”** (Num. 11:29).

Moses’ response points to an important theme: the Spirit of God cannot be confined by human structures or expectations. The seventy elders represent the Old Testament hierarchy of leadership among the Israelites, but God’s Spirit goes beyond this hierarchy to include those outside the formal circle, such as Eldad and Medad. This foreshadows the inclusivity of the New Covenant, where God's grace is extended beyond Israel.

New Testament Fulfillment: Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

In the Gospel of **Mark 9:38-43**, we see a parallel situation. The Apostle John tells Jesus, **“Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him because he was not following us.”** Jesus responds similarly to Moses: **“Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us”** (Mark 9:39-40).

Here, we observe another unfolding of God's inclusivity. The apostles, like Joshua, are concerned about preserving the exclusivity of their group. However, Jesus, like Moses, emphasizes that the power and authority of God are not limited to a specific circle. The Spirit can work through anyone who is open to it. This marks the expansion of leadership in the New Testament. While there is a formal structure (the apostles), God’s grace can operate beyond formal boundaries, preparing the Church for its universal mission to all peoples.

Typology: Old Testament Hierarchy and New Testament Hierarchy

In both stories, we see a structure of leadership established by God. In **Numbers 11**, God chooses the seventy elders to assist Moses, a clear sign of a formal hierarchy through which God’s will is carried out among the Israelites. This is a prefiguration of the **apostolic college** in the New Testament. The **seventy elders** foreshadow the apostles, who are chosen by Jesus to lead the Church and spread the Gospel (cf. **Luke 10:1**, where Jesus sends out the seventy-two disciples).

However, the key lesson from both readings is that **God’s Spirit operates both within and beyond the established hierarchy**. In the Old Testament, Eldad and Medad, though not part of

the seventy, receive the Spirit and prophesy. In the New Testament, the unnamed exorcist casts out demons in Jesus' name, even though he is not formally following the apostles. Both cases reflect a widening of God's grace and mission, beyond human expectations and structures.

Commentaries of the Fathers of the Church

St. John Chrysostom reflects on this theme of inclusivity, commenting on the Gospel passage: "The apostles wished to restrain this man from performing miracles because he was not in their company; but Jesus shows that His grace works even through those who are not visibly following Him, for what is essential is the faith and the good work done in His name" (Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew).

St. Augustine, in his work on the Psalms, notes that the Spirit of prophecy and grace is not confined to certain individuals or places: "The Spirit blows where it wills...He [God] works through all, but is confined by none" (Exposition on Psalm 103). Augustine's insight shows that both in Moses' time and in Jesus' time, the Spirit breaks through the boundaries that humans might set.

Application to Us Today

These passages call us to reflect on how **God's grace is not limited to certain individuals, roles, or places**. The formal structure of the Church (the hierarchy of bishops, priests, and deacons) is essential for guiding the faithful and maintaining the integrity of the sacraments. However, the **Holy Spirit works beyond these visible boundaries**, often using lay people, unexpected individuals, and even those on the margins to accomplish God's will.

As **members of the Body of Christ**, we are all called to be open to the Spirit's promptings, even in unexpected places. The prophesying of Eldad and Medad and the exorcism performed by the unnamed man remind us that we should not be quick to judge others' roles in God's plan based on external criteria. Instead, we are invited to recognize and affirm the good wherever it is found, while remaining faithful to the truth of the Gospel.

The warning in the Gospel against causing others to stumble (Mark 9:42-48) is also relevant. Just as Moses and Jesus resisted excluding others from participating in God's work, so too must we resist any temptation to **block or diminish the work of God** in others. We are called to remove the "stumbling blocks" in our own lives—whether that be pride, jealousy, or judgment—and instead support one another in faith.

Conclusion

The typology between **Numbers 11** and **Mark 9** reveals the beautiful truth that **God's Spirit is not bound by human limitations**. While He works through established hierarchies, He also moves in surprising ways, using people outside these structures to carry out His mission. As **St. Gregory the Great** wisely said, "The Spirit of prophecy did not descend only on Moses but overflowed to the seventy and beyond them, for the Spirit is infinite in grace" (Homilies on Ezekiel).

In our own lives, this invites us to be open to the Spirit's work and to avoid limiting God's grace based on human expectations. We must remember that God often chooses the humble, the unexpected, and the outsiders to accomplish His purposes. Therefore, we must cooperate with God's grace wherever we find it, allowing His Spirit to work both in and through us.