

The Episcopalian Church made news recently over the election of a bishop. A divorced man now in a gay relationship was chosen. Those opposed to his election said it approved the kind of partnership that should be censured. Those in favor said they chose a leader with the best qualifications for the job.

About the same time in the Catholic Church, 162 priests of the archdiocese of Milwaukee signed a petition to open the priesthood to married men. The president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops said the issue was closed. Priests will be celibate.

The Diocese of Cheyenne, Wyoming, asked more people to consider priesthood and religious life. This fall they have 14 seminarians; that's an unusually high number for a diocese their size. That handed the bishop one problem: He could not afford to educate 14 seminarians. So he took up a diocesan-wide second collection, hoping to receive \$60,000, or about half of what he needed. He did not get \$60,000. He got \$360,000.

Leadership in the church is a mystery. It's a mystery who is called to serve and who is not. Some priests lack the gifts or the purity of heart for leading, and some people with those gifts are not priests. The Holy Spirit distributes gifts freely. Some are institutionalized in ordained leadership, but other gifts are independent - they pleasantly surprise the church when they appear.

While crossing the desert, Moses and the Israelites sometimes left the camp and entered the tent for prayer. One day over at the tent God came down in a cloud, took some of the spirit that was on Moses and bestowed it on 70 elders. All of them prophesied. Suddenly a young man from back at the camp ran up to Moses and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." Joshua said, "Moses, my lord, stop them." Eldad and Medad were leading without the proper credentials. They were not at the tent in the right place when God distributed the spirit of prophesy upon the elders. Moses says it didn't matter. "Would that all the people of the LORD were prophets! Would that the LORD might bestow his spirit on them all."

Throughout our church God bestows the Spirit rather freely. Everybody has gifts. Some people have credentials. Some belong in leadership. Some in leadership don't belong there. But all of us may receive gifts of the Spirit, and all of us can put our gifts at the service of the church.