

**August 2023**

***Reflection***

**What Matters Most**

Give John credit. After a frustrating attempt to stop an independent exorcist, he went straight to Jesus with a report. John explained what he saw, what he did, why he did it, what he expected to happen, and what actually happened.

Because he addressed Jesus as “Teacher,” John probably expected to learn where the flaw lay. Why didn’t his approach work?

We may experience the same puzzlement. We try to correct errant kids, pastors, coworkers, neighbors, and strangers. Even when we think through what to say and then declare the words lovingly, we don’t always receive the results we imagined. Why does this approach not work?

Jesus’ reply to John is surprising. John’s premise was flawed. John presumed that the independent exorcist needed to be stopped. The problem was not how he handled the situation, but that he entered into it at all. What felt offensive to John didn’t seem offensive to Christ.

“Whoever is not against us is for us,” Jesus explained simply.

Whenever we see some wrong that needs to be righted, we may feel impelled to act. If the results of our best efforts are dissatisfying, we may even conclude that God isn’t acting with sufficient urgency.

However, sometimes we start from the wrong premise. The results we call dissatisfying reflect how we judge the situation, but maybe not how God judges it.

John learned that some situations that were urgent to him weren’t so urgent to Jesus.

Fr. Paul Turner

*Paul Turner is the pastor of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Kansas City, Missouri. He is the author of numerous books and is coeditor of the Liturgy and Life Study Bible.*

[CREDIT] Fr. Paul Turner, “What Matters Most” from the May 2024 issue of *Give Us This Day*, [www.giveusthisday.org](http://www.giveusthisday.org) (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2024). Used with permission.