

# Scripture Study

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time—Cycle B



## Opening prayer

Isaiah 53:10-11

(Psalm 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22)

Hebrews 4:14-16

Mark 10:35-45

## Overview of the Gospel:

- This Sunday's Gospel reading finds Jesus still resolutely making his way to Jerusalem and his destiny and, for the third time in Mark's gospel, predicting his upcoming Passion to his disciples (Mark 10:32-34. See also Mark 8:31 and 9:30-32).
- The apostles James and John (along with St. Peter) formed what can be called Jesus' "inner circle." They appear with him at key moments where the other apostles are not invited—at the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:21-24, 35-43), the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8), and in the Garden of Gethsemane during his prayer of agony (Mark 14:32-42).
- It was not long before this Sunday's episode, however, that he rebuked them as they argued over which of them was the greatest (verses 9:33-37). And now, with Jesus' latest prediction of his Passion still in their ears, James and John (verse 35) and then the other disciples (verse 41) again display a preoccupation with worldly ambition: they *still* misunderstand the Kingdom.
- Jesus takes the opportunity to contrast their concept of power-leadership in the world with that of servant-leader in the Kingdom of Heaven.

## Questions:

- Considering the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading, What do you think Jesus *really* thinks of you? How well do you think he understands the problems you face? How much do you think he actually *likes* you? How confident are you to approach the "throne of grace"—and how often do you do it to seek help for yourself when you need it?
- In the Gospel, what view of the Kingdom are James and John still clinging to? How do you think could they respond like this in light of Jesus' words in verses 33—34?
- What is the "baptism" James and John are to be baptized with (verse 38)? What forms did that baptism take in their lives (see Acts 12:2 and Revelation 1:9)?
- What are the *cup* (Matthew 26:39), the *baptism* (Luke 12:49-50), and the *glory* (John 1:14, 17:5) as each applies to Jesus?
- What were some of the reasons, do you think, the other disciples were "indignant" at James and John (verse 41)?
- How does Jesus practice what he preached? In this context, what is a "ransom for many" (verse 45)? How is the death of Christ the ultimate service to all?
- Who in your experience has been a true servant leader? Are you a servant leader at work or home? Could you be? How? Do you resist following the servant's path to greatness? What is one way could you serve this week?

**Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 608, 618, 1225, 1551, 1570**

## Closing prayer

*His Majesty knows best what is suitable for us; it is not for us to advise him what to give us, for he can rightly reply that we know not what we ask.* —St. Teresa of Avila

**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!**

# "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve"

**Scripture:** Mark 10:35-45

35 And James and John, the sons of Zeb'edee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." 36 And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" 37 And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." 38 But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" 39 And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." 41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. 42 And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

**Meditation:** Would you rather be the leader or a follower, take first place or the last? Two of Jesus' disciples boldly asked Jesus to promote them to first place in his kingdom. The desire for greatness



seems to be inbred in all of us. Who wants to be last or least? Jesus did the unthinkable – he reversed the order to true greatness and glory. If we want to be first and great, then we must place ourselves at the disposal of others by putting their interests first and by taking on their cares and concerns as if they were our own. Jesus wedded authority with unconditional love and service with total sacrifice – the willing sacrifice of one's life for the sake of another. Authority without sacrificial love is brutish and self-serving. Jesus also used stark language to explain what kind of sacrifice he had in mind. His disciples must drink his cup if they expect to reign with him in his kingdom. The cup he had in mind was a bitter one involving crucifixion – laying down one's life even to the point of shedding one's blood for the sake of Christ.

What kind of cup does the Lord have in mind for each one of us? For some disciples such a cup entails physical suffering and the painful

struggle of martyrdom – the shedding of one's blood for the sake of Christ's name. But for many of us, it entails the long routine of the Christian life, with all its daily sacrifices, disappointments, setbacks, struggles, and temptations. The Lord has offered his life for our sake and he calls us to freely offer our lives in a daily sacrifice of love and service for others. What makes such sacrifice a joy rather than a burden is love – the kind of love which has power to transform and change our lives and the lives of those around us. Paul the Apostle tells us that this "love" is a pure gift "which God has poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Romans 5:5). If we allow God's love to transform our lives, then no sacrifice will be too great or hard to make.

An early church father summed up Jesus' teaching with the expression: "to serve is to reign with Christ." We share in God's power, authority, and kingdom by loving others as he has loved us and by laying down our lives in humble caring service for the sake of our neighbor's welfare. Are you ready to lay down your life and to serve others as Jesus did?

*"Lord Jesus, set me free from fear and pride that I may be a servant of love and compassion for others. May the fire of your love inflame my heart that I may give generously and serve joyfully for your sake."*

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