

Homily – Mark 10: 35-45
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
17th October, 2021 - Sooeey

A boy was consistently coming home late from school. There was no good reason for his tardiness, and no amount of discussion seemed to help. Finally, in desperation, the boy's father sat him down and said: "The next time you come late from school you are going to be given bread and water for your supper -and nothing else. Is that perfectly clear son?" The boy looked straight into his father's eyes and nodded. He understood perfectly. A few days later the boy came home even later than usual. That night however, when they sat down together at the table there was only a single slice of bread in his plate and a glass of water. His father's and mother's plates were full of food. The father waited for the full impact to sink in, then, quietly took the boy's plate and placed it in front of himself. He took his own plate and put it in front of the boy. The boy understood what his father was doing. His father was taking upon himself the punishment that he, the boy, had brought upon himself by his own delinquent behavior. Years later the boy recalled the incident and said: "All my life I've known what God is like by what my father did that night."

The Scripture readings of today describe leadership as the sacrificial service done for others and offer Jesus as the best example. They also explain the *servant leadership* of Jesus, pinpointing service and sacrifice as the criteria of greatness in Christ's Kingdom.

Today's Gospel explains how Jesus has accomplished the Messianic mission of saving mankind from the slavery of sin by becoming the "Suffering Servant." In the context of the selfish request made by James and John for key positions in the Messianic kingdom, Jesus challenged His followers to become great by serving others with sacrificial *agape* love: "*Whoever wishes to be great must be a servant.*"

Rabindranath Tagore the great Indian poet and Asia's First Nobel Prize winner in Literature (1913) has a beautiful short poem which goes thus:

I slept and dreamt that life was Joy;
Then I awoke and realized
that life was Service.
And then I went to work – and, lo
and behold, I discovered that
service is Joy.

Well, today's Gospel teaches us that true happiness comes from surrendering ourselves completely in

humble service to God through Christ. And all we need is a servant's heart, mind, eyes, and touch.

Now, we see in the Gospel of today, James and John slide up to Jesus and they ask Him for places of honour and glory in His kingdom – a moment they should have focused on the fact that Jesus is going to Jerusalem where He will be arrested, tortured and crucified. But 'No', they are thinking of themselves. Yet, Jesus is surprisingly patient, because He wants James and John and all of us to understand something crucial: That, if we want to share in the glory of Jesus, we ought to share in the sufferings of Jesus. And, that is how love works. If you love someone during the happy times, you cannot run away from that person during the suffering times. And God's love is the constant we can count on in life.

Now, in order to help James and John understand what He is trying to teach, Jesus asks them a question: "Can you drink the cup that I would drink?". In other words: "will you love me in your happiest times and your saddest times? Will you trust me in your blessing times and your grieving times? And to Jesus, it is not about sitting on his left or right in the kingdom, but, about standing. He asks them: Can you stand by me? Will you stand for me? And He is asking all of us the same question today.

The following story is told about John Ruskin, the 18th century English writer. One day, he was visiting with a friend, and he was standing looking out the front window of the house. It was night-time, and the lamp-lighter was lighting the streetlamps. From the window one could see only the lamps that were being lit, and the light the lamp-lighter was carrying from one lamp to another. The lamp-lighter himself could not be seen. Ruskin remarked that the lamp-lighter was a good example of the genuine Christian. His way was clearly lit by the lights he lit, and the light he kept burning, even though he himself might not be known or seen. Today, Jesus tells us that we are to become that Light for others....

Now, following the maxim of Jesus: “*The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.*”, we are invited to reflect Jesus the Light in today’s world. It is in service and humility, Jesus says, that one will find true greatness in the eyes of God. And according to Jesus, greatness consists not in what we have, nor in what we can get from others, but in what we give to others. The CEO in Jesus’ kingdom is the one who serves the needs of all the others.

A room-service waiter at a Marriott hotel learned that the sister of a guest had just died. The waiter, named Charles, bought a sympathy card, had hotel staff members sign it, and gave it to the distraught guest with a piece of hot apple pie. “Mr. Marriott,” the guest later wrote to the president of Marriott Hotels, “I’ll never meet you. And I don’t need to meet you, because I met Charles. And now I know what you stand for. ... I want to assure you that as long as I live, I will stay at your hotels. And I will tell my friends to stay at your hotels.”

Well, dear Brothers and Sisters, we may not be able to transform the whole world, but our little acts of kindness can make a big difference to the person/ persons to whom we are kind and that is how we become truly Christian. Let us then dear friends bring God’s light wherever it is needed, to give Jesus to those who have not experienced Him, and to be signs and bearers of God’s love to everyone we meet. God bless you all, **Amen.**