

29th Sunday per Annum - B
Isaiah 53:10-11;
Hebrews 4:14-16;
Mark 10:35-45
Little Flower - 10/18/15

My Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus not only reveals God to us. He also reveals us to ourselves.

The reading from Hebrews reminds us that Jesus is the Son of God but also that he is profoundly human: *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin.”* As we pray in Eucharistic Prayer IV, *“Made incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, he shared our human nature in all things but sin.”* Because Jesus is profoundly human, he understands all of our human weaknesses and temptations. If we better understood and shared this Good News, I think more people, especially younger people, would want to develop a personal relationship with Jesus.

If someone asks us why Christ died, we typically respond that he died to save us from our sins. In today’s first reading, the Prophet Isaiah prophesied that the messiah would give his life as an offering for sin. This is what Jesus meant when he said that the Son of Man came *“to give his life as a ransom for many.”* This is what the author of Hebrews meant when he referred to Jesus as the great high priest. Therefore, if someone asks us how Christ saved us, we can say that Christ offered his life to God for us.

The statement *“Christ offered his life to God for us”* also reveals us to ourselves. In offering his life to God for us, Jesus joined love for God and love for us perfectly. If we want to live full human lives, love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable. Also, if he offered his life to God for us, he revealed that all authentic love is sacrificial. In everyday terms, authentic human love must always be self-revealing, self-giving, and self-sacrificing.

Today’s Gospel does not show Jesus’ disciples at their best. First, James and John demonstrated that they did not understand who Jesus was or what he was about by asking Jesus if they could sit at his right and his left in his glory. The other ten disciples then became indignant at James and John not because James and John did not understand Jesus or his mission but because the other ten wanted the same glory for themselves.

In response, Jesus first reminded them that among the Gentiles, those who are recognized as rulers lord it over their people and their great ones make their authority felt but added, *“But it shall not be so among you.”* One of the three idols or temptations in every age is the desire for power, control, and influence. This temptation is found in families, businesses, government and politics, and even churches.

Jesus concluded, *“Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* At the Last Supper in John’s Gospel, Jesus demonstrated the meaning of humble service by washing the feet of his disciples, challenging them to do the same, even reminding them *“happiness will be yours if you behave accordingly”* [13:17; JB: London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966].

My brothers and sisters, in today’s Gospel, although Jesus was calling his disciples to perform humble service for others, he was also calling them to servant leadership. Servant leaders model both leadership and service for others by their personal example. However, more importantly, servant leaders call forth from other their best in leadership and service in others. As Christians, all of us are called to be servant leaders in our families, in our work, in our community, and in our church.