

29th Sunday per Annum - B
Isaiah 53:10-11;
Hebrews 4:14-16;
Mark 10:35-45
Little Flower - 10/17/21

My Brothers and Sisters,

In last Sunday's homily, I mentioned that in telling the rich young man to sell all he had and give to the poor, Jesus warned him not to fall victim to the idols of society. The three idols or false gods throughout history have been money and possessions, power and prestige, and pleasure. Although there is nothing wrong with any of them in themselves, they become wrong when we make any or all of them more important than God and others and our authentic selves.

In today's Gospel, Jesus had to address the second of the three idols: power and prestige. We need to remember that James and John were among Jesus' closest disciples. They were among the first whom he called. They, along with Peter, would witness his transfiguration. Yet in today's Gospel, they asked to sit at his right and his left in his glory. As close as they were to him, they had completely missed the point of his teaching and his life.

Interestingly, the same passage appears in Matthew's Gospel with a significant difference. In Matthew's Gospel, it is their mother who asks Jesus to seat them at his right and at his left. Scripture scholars tell us that Matthew tended to soften anything that would make any of the apostles look bad. Clearly James and John looked bad in today's Gospel.

However, they were not the only apostles who had missed the point of Jesus' teaching and life. The Gospels tell us that the other ten apostles became indignant at James and John. They were not indignant with James and John for missing the point of Jesus' teaching. No, they were indignant because they would have wanted those positions for themselves. Therefore, Jesus taught them the meaning of servant leadership.

Jesus was the model servant leader: "*For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" First, servant leadership includes humble service. Jesus modeled humble service at the Last Supper when he washed his disciples' feet. However, servant leadership is so much more. Authentic servant leadership calls forth the best in others. It challenges and helps others to become the-best-version-of-themselves. Servant leadership looks different in personal and professional relationships. I would encourage all of you who are husbands and wives, parents and children, to ask yourselves what servant leadership looks like in your marriage or family. As Matthew Kelly wrote, "The purpose of a family is to help one another become the-best-version-of-ourselves and in the process contribute to the greater good of society and humanity." Likewise, I would ask everyone who is employed to ask what servant leadership looks like in your profession or jobs.

Who are leaders? According to Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges in *Lead Like Jesus*, anyone who influences or seeks to influence others for good or for bad is a leader. Do we influence others for good or for bad? Are we able and willing to be prophetic leaders? On social media, we hear a lot about influencers. Do we allow ourselves to be influenced for good or for bad by these influencers?

My brothers and sisters, today's reading from the Letter to the Hebrews should be very comforting. Today's reading from Hebrews reminds us that Jesus, the Son of God, the great high priest, is able to sympathize with our weaknesses because he has been tested in every way we have yet without sin. In other words, Jesus is like us in all things but sin. What this means is that Jesus identifies with every element of our humanity, with every feeling we feel. Therefore, the reading concludes, "*So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.*" In our language, when we are struggling, especially when we are struggling with sin, we really do need to turn to Jesus and ask for and receive his grace, his mercy.