

29B SML 2018  
MK 10:35-45

Among the Twelve Apostles were three sets of brothers:

1. Peter and Andrew
2. James and Jude
3. and James and John.

This morning's/evening's gospel speaks of the last set, James and John, who are mentioned second and third in the list of Apostles. With Peter, they belong to the group of the privileged disciples whom Our Blessed Lord admitted to important moments in His life:

- ✓ Peter, James and John entered Peter's house in Capernaum to cure his mother-in-law (MK 1:29)
- ✓ Peter, James and John followed Our Blessed Lord into the house of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue whose daughter He was to bring back to life (MK 5:37)
- ✓ Peter, James and John followed Our Transfigured Lord up Mt. Tabor, where they experience the Lord's glory, they saw Him talking to Moses and Elijah; they saw divine splendor shine out of Him
- ✓ Shortly before the Passover, Our Blessed Lord chose two disciples and sent them ahead of Him to prepare the

Upper Room for the Last Supper, it was to Peter and John that He entrusted this task. (LK 22:8)

The prominent position of James and John in the group of the Twelve makes it easier to understand the initiative taken with Jesus in this evening's/morning's gospel, asking that, in His glory, they sit, one at His right and the other at His left. Jesus answered by asking the question, "Can you drink the cup that I drink?" To which they answered, "We can." And they did, James eventually, and John immediately.

Returning to the scene of the Last Supper, as Jesus shares His troubled heart, "One of you will betray me," Beloved John was resting on the chest of Our Blessed Lord, inches from His troubled Sacred Heart. It's one of my most treasured verses of scripture, for where else would any of us rather be than resting on Jesus' chest, inches from His Most Sacred Heart?

Later that night in the garden, when all hell broke loose, it was John who remained faithful, as the lone Apostle who stood with Mary at the foot of the Cross. Ever faithful to drinking the cup, it was to John that Our Blessed Lord entrusted His Mother from the Cross when He said, "Behold your Mother."

In the days after the Resurrection, we find “the sons of Zebedee,” James and John, busy with Peter and some of the other disciples on the night when they caught nothing, which was followed, after the intervention of Our Resurrected Lord, by the miraculous catch. It was John, “the disciple Jesus loved” who first recognized “the Lord” and pointed Him out to Peter.

We know that James and John were stalwart leaders of the early Church:

- ✓ Acts 3 speaks of Peter and John working a miracle in the name of Jesus Christ.
- ✓ Acts 4 speaks of Peter and John witnessing their faith in Jesus before the Sanhedrin.
- ✓ Acts 8 speaks of Peter and John being sent to the Church of Jerusalem to strengthen the people of Samaria
- ✓ Acts 12 speaks, rather matter of factly, of Herod Agrippa putting James to the sword. “About that time, King Herod laid hands upon some members of the church to harm them. He had James, the brother of John, killed by the sword (period)

It is the frankness of this verse, devoid of any narrative detail, that reveals, on the one hand, how normal it was for Christians to witness to the Lord with their own lives, and on

the other, that James had a position of relevance in the Church of Jerusalem, partly because of the role I listed earlier that James played during the years of Jesus' ministry. So, to unnerve the Church and please the Jews, he limelighted James.

It is precisely this frankness in confessing the faith, in giving up one's life, that lives on as an example and a warning for all of us always to be ready to declare firmly our steadfast attachment to Christ, putting faith before any human calculation or concern, whether in the public square as in Acts Chapter 8, or within the walls of any diocesan chancery, as in the Church crisis today.

To achieve this bravery, it is not enough to follow Him and to Listen to Him outwardly; it is also necessary to live with Jesus and live like Jesus. This is only possible in the context of a deep relationship with Him, filled with warmth and total trust. This is what happens between friends; and for this reason, Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends . . . No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what His master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." (JN 15:13,15)

These are tough times in the Church. Tough times there have been. Tough times there will be. Jesus predicted these times when He said, "the gates of hell shall not prevail." The Church is like any other family. The gates of hell are outside the Church, and the gates of hell are inside the Church. But they will not prevail. There are some who are jumping ship. I would not give those who have wronged the Church, or Her innocent members the satisfaction of taking away my faith, my priesthood, or separating me from the Church I have come to love.

For the nervous, for the anxious who feel like the Church is going down for the last time, take as a mild sedative a good fat history book. And there be reminded that ever since that first Pentecost, that day the Holy Spirit descended upon the Church, wave after wave of trouble has rolled against the Church:

1. Christians being devoured by lions in Roman amphitheatres
2. persecutions under the merciless, like Diocletian who prided himself with the inscription, "To Diocletian who destroyed the very name Christian!"
3. the heresies that confused our teachings but later helped to define it

4. the barbarians who invaded but eventually put down their spears and knelt to be baptized
5. the cruel excesses of the Spanish Inquisition
6. the Protestant Reformation
7. the French Revolution
8. the antipopes
9. the Oath against Modernism
10. the clergy scandal in recent years.

Each time the waves of heresies, persecutions, scandals, wars and reformations subsided and the survivors looked around, there was always the Catholic Church. Because the Catholic Church is guided by the Holy Spirit, the gates of hell will never prevail against Her, and the Catholic Church is forever.

For over 2,000 years, the Church has done much good, in a confused and hurting world. And in this world filled with hardship and pain, it is comforting to know that some things remain consistent, true, and strong - our Catholic faith. We are

the Catholic Church. And we are guided by the Holy Spirit, and the Catholic Church is forever.