

My Dear People of God,

Today we celebrate the 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time and we are coming towards the end of the Liturgical Year.

In this Sunday's Gospel, we continue to read from chapter ten (10) of St Mark's Gospel that gives an account of Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem. It is his final journey on earth and in it He gives very important instructions to His followers about the Kingdom of God. Last Sunday we heard Jesus lament the particular challenges those with many possessions face in order to enter the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:17-30). In the verses preceding the gospel text of today (Mark 10:32-34), Jesus predicts his passion to the Twelve, who are amazed and afraid. Jesus' words to his closest disciples are intended to prepare them for the events that will occur in Jerusalem, His suffering, death and resurrection. But they seem to have missed the point!

In today's Gospel (Mark 10:35-45), James and John ask to be given seats of honor when Jesus enters into his glory. It is evident that the disciples haven't grasped the Kingdom of God yet! They think it is like the worldly kingdoms and so they are seeking positions of prominence. They want to share Jesus' glory, but do not appear to understand that his glory will be preceded by his suffering. Jesus notes their lack of understanding and predicts the suffering they will endure for the sake of the Gospel. Jesus says that the honor they seek is not His to give. When the other ten hear what James and John have asked, Mark reports that they were indignant (angry or upset) most likely because they were also eyeing the same positions! Jesus takes the opportunity to teach them the importance of service and sacrifice in the life of a disciple. In particular, he prepares the Twelve for the leadership roles they will have in the emerging Christian communities which will call them to be of service. Echoing the Gospel we heard several weeks ago (25<sup>th</sup> Sunday- Mark 9:33-37/September 23), Jesus reiterates that His teaching is countercultural. In today's Gospel, Jesus contrasts the dynamics within the community of disciples with those shown by the rulers of the Gentiles. He invites them to a new perspective on the exercise of authority.

My dear brothers and sisters, people seek authority for different reasons. Some people like the power that goes with it and how it makes them feel important. Others like the prestige it brings. Others like the money and comforts that come with it. All these reasons have one thing in common: authority is seen as opportunity to promote oneself! Jesus instead invites them and indeed all of us to see authority as an opportunity to serve others and He gives Himself as an example. ***He did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.***

In our own day just as in Jesus' day, people with authority in any relationship can be abusive, both actively and passively. The most recent revelations have brought an awareness of some heinous and destructive types of abuse of authority in our nation- in the social - political spheres and even in the Church. The message of Jesus today therefore is very pertinent:

*"You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles (non believers) lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you.*

*Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all.*

In our modern time, the exemplification of this teaching from Jesus was seen all over the world in the life and ministry of Mother Theresa of Calcutta. She was a great, respected and honoured woman. She had such profound power and authority that crowds would gather to listen to her, leaders of nations would seek to meet her. All this because she was a servant especially of the least members of society.

As we continue on our journey of faith and as we strive for greatness in the Kingdom of God, let us strive to be of service to one another and to God.

God bless,

*Fr Simon Peter*