



# LIVING THE GOSPEL

**25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024**

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**Theme: "37 Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me."**

## **Gathering Prayer**

**All:** O God, who founded all the commands of your sacred Law upon love of you and of our neighbor, grant that, by keeping your precepts, we may merit to attain eternal life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **Exploring the Word**

### **Gospel Reading: Mark 9:30-37**

<sup>30</sup> They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he would not have any one know it; <sup>31</sup> for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he will rise." <sup>32</sup> But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to ask him.

<sup>33</sup> And they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" <sup>34</sup> But they were silent; for on the way they had discussed with one another who was the greatest.

<sup>35</sup> And he sat down and called the twelve; and he said to them, "If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." <sup>36</sup> And he took a child, and put him in the midst of them; and taking him in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup> "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

## **Gospel Focus**

This gospel has Jesus reiterating over and over that he is here to overturn our expectations. Three times, he reminds us that God does not think or work as we do and that all our hoarding of power and honor and security is ultimately for naught. First, Jesus reminds the disciples of what we heard last week: he is going to suffer and die. This is not what they expect of the Christ, but God does not think or work as we do. Second, he responds to their bickering for status by redefining that status entirely. The one whom God will consider greatest is the one who will appear to our human eyes to be the least. God does not think or work as we do. Finally, Jesus identifies with a child, one with no political power or social voice, one who would have been likely been overlooked by those going about their adult business. Again (and again and again), God does not think or work as we do.

## **Gospel Reflection**

In some faith communities, the same people are called upon time after time to serve on the most influential committees and make the important decisions. Certain other people are always passed over. They themselves may not recognize the gifts they have to offer until someone calls them forth and helps them develop their talents. This is what Jesus does in today's gospel.

While his disciples are wrangling over who is the greatest among them, Jesus turns to those who are left out and pulls him or her into the very center of the circle. He teaches his disciples that the one who appears most vulnerable and seems to need the greatest amount of care can also be the one who has the most to teach us about what it is to be Christ like and God like.

For most disciples, the temptation is not to seek honor, glory, and high positions. Having interiorized Jesus' mandate to be "servant of all," we may instead find ourselves falling prey to the subtle desire to want to be the greatest of servants—the one who sits on the most committees, spends the most hours in prayer, teaches the greatest number of students, preaches the best homilies. Jesus redirects his disciples' attention to those who are the most vulnerable and whose gifts are undervalued and least developed. Those who would be good leaders in the pattern of Jesus must turn to those of lowest status, embrace them, and bring them into the midst of the circle.

In the gospel passage, Jesus is addressing disciples who have some measure of power, privilege, and status; he invites them to a leadership style based on relinquishment and service to all, especially the neediest. By contrast, Jesus' leadership empowers those who are forced into positions of servitude in society and places them at the center.

The manner of acting diffuses the jealousy and selfish ambition that James decries in the second reading. James chronicles all kinds of undesirable results that come from choices based on self-interest. The first reading, by contrast, like the gospel, speaks about a manner of leadership by persons devoted to justice and peacebuilding and warns of the negative consequences that befall them. It exposes the thinking of the wicked ones who resent an upright person who speaks the truth to them about the need to mend their ways. They would sooner kill than heed such a messenger. They plot to torture and kill the upright one, testing not only the genuineness of the just one but even putting God's faithfulness on trial. They mistakenly think that the proof of intimacy with God is preservation from any kind of harm.

Saint Teresa of Avila remarked that on this paradox, complaining to God about the trials and tribulations she had to endure on account of her closeness to God: "If this is how you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few!" That God upholds the faithful, even if the manner of doing so is inscrutable to us, is affirmed in today's responsorial psalm.

## **Old/New Testament and CCC links**

### **First Reading — Wisdom 2:12, 17-20**

<sup>12</sup> "Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; he reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training. ... <sup>17</sup> Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; <sup>18</sup> for if the righteous man is God's son, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. <sup>19</sup> Let us test him with insult and torture, that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. <sup>20</sup> Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says, he will be protected."

### **Responsorial Reading — Psalm 54:3-8**

***R: The Lord upholds my life.***

O God, by your name save me, and by your might defend my cause. O God, hear my prayer; hearken to the words of my mouth. **(R)**

For the haughty have risen up against me, the ruthless seek my life; they set not God before their eyes. **(R)**

Behold, God is my helper; the Lord sustains my life. Freely will I offer you sacrifice; I will praise your name, O Lord, for its goodness. **(R)**

## **Second Reading — James 3:16-4:3**

<sup>16</sup> For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity. <sup>18</sup> And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

<sup>4:1</sup> What causes wars, and what causes fighting among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? <sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

## **Catechism of The Catholic Church**

**474.** By its union to the divine wisdom in the person of the Word incarnate, Christ enjoyed in his human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans he had come to reveal.(Cf. Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 14:18-20, 26-30) What he admitted to not knowing in this area, he elsewhere declared himself not sent to reveal.(Cf. Mk 13:32, Acts 1:7)

**557.** "When the days drew near for him to be taken up [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem."(Lk 9:51; cf. Jn 13:1) By this decision he indicated that he was going up to Jerusalem prepared to die there. Three times he had announced his Passion and Resurrection; now, heading toward Jerusalem, Jesus says: "It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."(Lk 13:33; cf. Mk 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 10:32-34)

**1825.** Christ died out of love for us, while we were still "enemies." (Rom 5:10) The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our enemies, to make ourselves the neighbor of those farthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself. (Cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 10:27-37; Mk 9:37; Mt 25:40, 45.)

The Apostle Paul has given an incomparable depiction of charity: "charity is patient and kind, charity is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Charity does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Charity bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Cor 13:4-7)

## **Sharing and Discussion**

1. In what ways can humility be a strength rather than a weakness? What are some practical steps we can take to promote humility and selflessness?

2. How does the concept of leadership relate to being a servant to all? Is it an easy task to be a servant-leader?

3. How can these be applied in everyday life, such as at home, at work or in church?

### **Closing Prayer**

**All:** God of all blessings, you teach us the way to eternal life. Hear our prayers that we might come to embody your lessons in the world today. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen.