



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**29th Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 20th 2024**

Theme: “⁴³ But it shall not be so among you; whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.”

Gathering Prayer

All: Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. 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 10:35-45

³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶ And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³⁷ And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

³⁸ But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” ³⁹ And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. ⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Gospel Focus

This gospel passage repeats themes from several weeks ago. Jesus repeats that the disciples who wish to be great need to live lives of service to others. Those who appear “great” in worldly terms are not the ones God rewards most richly. This seems repetitive, but it needs to be, because the disciples still do not get it. They are still vying for places of honor within their group, bickering over the glory they assume they will attain by their association with Jesus. We are often like the disciples, we hear these lessons repeatedly but we struggle to live them out fully. As he does with the disciples, Jesus

offers endless patience for our slow learning. He offers repetition with love and with trust that we are capable of achieving what he asks us.

Gospel Reflection

In today's gospel, James and John have just heard Jesus speak for the third time about being handed over, mocked, scourged, and condemned to death. The brothers focus their attention on what reward they will gain if they endure such abuse. They envision Jesus enthroned in glory after his ordeal and themselves seated in the places of honor at his right and left. The other disciples are indignant with the two brothers, probably not because James and John have missed Jesus' message but because they beat the others in requesting the honorable spots.

In response, Jesus uses two powerful symbols. He asks if James and John can drink the cup that he will drink and whether they can be baptized with the baptism he will undergo. In the Scriptures, "cup" is frequently used as a metaphor for suffering. That meaning is clear in the Gethsemane scene where Jesus begs God to let the cup pass by him if possible. Likewise, baptism here signifies being plunged into suffering and going through the throes of death, to emerge into new life.

The self-confidence James and John exude is astounding. They quickly assert that they can drink this cup and undergo this baptism. However, do they really know what they are saying? Their eagerness leads us to reflect on our own ability to answer Jesus' questions. Perhaps there have been times when we eagerly said, "I do" or "We can" without fully knowing to what we were committing ourselves. On the other hand, we may know the demands of dedicating ourselves to Jesus' way of costly love, but the thought of a reward seems to make it worth the price.

Jesus takes the disciples another step deeper. The reward for which they hope beyond this life is not within Jesus' control to give, and it must not be their motivation. Jesus speaks disapprovingly about any who seek displays of greatness and authority over others—apparently even in the next life. The hope of reversal, of the servant becoming enthroned, is not what motivates Jesus, nor should it motivate his disciples.

The only "throne" that he shares with his disciples is the "throne of grace" (Heb 4:16). Here, one receives not places of honor alongside him but mercy, grace, and timely help. The wellspring for this mercy is that Jesus has himself endured all that we endure and is thus able to suffer with all those who suffer.

Jesus speaks about his life given as a "ransom for many." The term *ransom* here refers literally to the buying back of the freedom of a slave. It too is a metaphor that expresses in a limited way the freeing effects of Jesus' costly love. However, this metaphor can lead us to slip again into a tit-for-tat mentality, in which a reward can be purchased or earned. Today's responsorial psalm captures the core of what Jesus attempts to teach his disciples: the only adequate response to suffering is to turn toward the Merciful One, in whom we place all our trust.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Isaiah 53:10-11

¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand; ¹¹ he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities.

Responsorial Reading — Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

R: Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Upright is the word of the Lord, and all his works are trustworthy. He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the Lord the earth is full. **(R)**

See, the eyes of the Lord are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness, to deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine. **(R)**

Our soul waits for the Lord, who is our help and our shield. May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us who have put our hope in you. **(R)**

Second Reading — Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

536. The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world".(Jn 1:29; cf. Is 53:12) Already he is anticipating the "baptism" of his bloody death.(Cf. Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50) Already he is coming to "fulfill all righteousness", that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins.(Mt 3:15; cf. 26:39) The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son.(Cf. Lk 3:22; Is 42:1) The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to "rest on him".(Jn 1:32-33; cf. Is 11:2) Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism "the heavens were opened"(Mt 3:16) - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation.

608. After agreeing to baptize him along with the sinners, John the Baptist looked at Jesus and pointed him out as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world".(Jn 1:29; cf. Lk 3:21; Mt 3:14-15; Jn 1:36) By doing so, he reveals that Jesus is at the same time the suffering Servant who silently allows himself to be led to the slaughter and who bears the sin of the multitudes, and also the Paschal Lamb, the symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover.(Is 53:7,12; cf. Jer 11:19; Ex 12:3-14; Jn 19:36; 1 Cor 5:7) Christ's whole life expresses his mission: "to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."(Mk 10:45)

618. The cross is the unique sacrifice of Christ, the "one mediator between God and men".(1 Tim 2:5) But because in his incarnate divine person he has in some way united himself to every man, "the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God,

in the paschal mystery" is offered to all men.(GS 22 # 5; cf. # 2) He calls his disciples to "take up [their] cross and follow [him]",(Mt 16:24) for "Christ also suffered for [us], leaving [us] an example so that [we] should follow in his steps."(1 Pt 2:21) In fact Jesus desires to associate with his redeeming sacrifice those who were to be its first beneficiaries.(Cf Mk 10:39; Jn 21:18-19; Col 1:24) This is achieved supremely in the case of his mother, who was associated more intimately than any other person in the mystery of his redemptive suffering.(Cf. Lk 2:35)

Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven.(St. Rose of Lima: cf. P. Hansen, *Vita mirabilis* (Louvain, 1668).)

1225. In his Passover Christ opened to all men the fountain of Baptism. He had already spoken of his Passion, which he was about to suffer in Jerusalem, as a "Baptism" with which he had to be baptized.(Mk 10:38; cf. Lk 12:50) The blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus are types of Baptism and the Eucharist, the sacraments of new life.(Cf. Jn 19:34; 1 Jn 5:6-8) From then on, it is possible "to be born of water and the Spirit"(Cf. Jn 3:5) in order to enter the Kingdom of God.

See where you are baptized, see where Baptism comes from, if not from the cross of Christ, from his death. There is the whole mystery: he died for you. In him you are redeemed, in him you are saved.(St. Ambrose, *De sacr.* 2, 2, 6: PL 16, 444; cf. Jn 3:5)

Sharing and Discussion

1. What did Jesus do to demonstrate being servant and "slave of all"?
2. Redefine in light of Jesus' discourse, what it means to "serve."
3. Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you?"
 - a. What is your answer?
 - b. What is Jesus doing for us without our asking?

Closing Prayer

Leader: Loving God, in the waters of baptism you empower each of us to proclaim the good news of your son Jesus Christ. Hear our prayers that with hope we might follow in the way of Jesus to everlasting life. 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.

Living The Gospel bible study/sharing via Zoom
Every Wednesday
Time: 8 – 9.30 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2760073734?pwd=cDRZR2JQMGRobVkwY3ZVF5L1BwZz09>

Meeting ID: 276 007 3734
Passcode: 1WordOfGod

All are welcome!

For more information contact:

Mary Bay- 96965049 (marybay2468@gmail.com)

George Chee- 97399216 (georgejc@gmail.com)

References:

- (1) Gospel Notes are taken from The Navarre Bible
- (2) Gospel Reflection and Living Liturgy are taken from "Living Liturgy for Sundays and Solemnities" by Order of St Benedict. Published by Liturgical Ministry, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota
Reprinted with permission.
- (3) CCC references are taken from Catechism of The Catholic Church