

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD  
IN  
THE CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY  
TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
September 22, 2024**

**SCRIPTURES:**

Wisdom 2:17-20

James 3:16 - 4:3

Mark 9:30-37

Those who depend on God are opposed.

Quarreling comes from selfishness.

Looking for privileges: not part of God’s kingdom.

**READ THE SCRIPTURES:**

*Read the Scriptures carefully in your group beginning with the Gospel. Take a few minutes in silence to hear the Lord speaking to the heart. Remember that the word of God in the Bible is primarily addressed to the Church community. What does God want the community to hear today?*

**SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:**

**Wisdom:**

The witness of believers poses a challenge to those who have abandoned their faith. The wisdom of the unfaithful proclaims that life is meaningless, that one can only find consolation in self-indulgence, that power is the only way to success. The wisdom of the faithful proclaims that God will vindicate those who serve him. We see a depth of cynicism in the proposal of the unjust: “Let us oppress the just to see if God will save them!” This passage is echoed by the scoffers who passed by the cross of Jesus: “Let God save him if he is the Messiah!”

**James:**

There are divisions and factions in the community. Some claim a special kind of wisdom not available to others. James teaches that heavenly wisdom does not result in jealousy and strife. Spiritual wisdom will bring peace to the Church. The source of disunity in the Church can be found in greed and competitiveness. False motives at prayer lead to no answer from God.

**Mark:**

The community for whom Mark wrote was experiencing suffering and death, trials and persecution. As disciples of a master who had suffered and died, they were called to triumph with him over their difficulties, not without those difficulties. The Messiah himself is a Messiah who will go through the Passion of Good Friday before arriving at the resurrection of Easter. Disciples are no different from their master. How could they be looking for positions of power and prestige in the world or in the Church? Everlasting life given by God constitutes the only

blessing worth looking for.

There are three predictions of the Passion in Mark (8:31; 9:31-32; 10:32-34). Each time, the disciples end up being confused, and each time, Jesus clarifies not only his own destiny but theirs also. Disciples have a destiny similar to that of their Master: He will undergo the Passion; so will they. He will rise to new life; so will they.

Jesus teaches the disciples with what is called an “enacted parable.” He places a child among them and teaches that welcoming a child has the same value as welcoming him. We know from history that children had no legal rights in the culture of the times. Neither in Rome nor in Israel were there any laws favoring the dignity or the rights of children. In both cultures, girls had even fewer rights than boys. Jesus takes a lowly, defenseless child and identifies himself with that child. Solidarity with the oppressed, with those who have no rights, seems to be the point Jesus is making. “No one will stand up for the child. Well, I am one with that child,” says Jesus. “No one will stand up for me when I come to trial. That’s who I really am: poor and defenseless. Can you be any more than I am?”

This whole section of Mark is devoted to Jesus teaching the disciples the true meaning of discipleship. The teaching is for us, also, in our times. We who are disciples will receive the same treatment the Lord was given. Even if no one stands up for us, Jesus will be with us in his love and power.

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. The disciples were ashamed when Jesus asked what they had been discussing. Do you know of instances when the Church was humiliated as it tried to be greedy and ambitious? Have you felt ashamed when your family tried to obtain what it had no right to? Ambition can mean several things, some of it virtue and some of it vice. Do you know the difference? Is your parish ambitious for glory that it does not deserve?

2. Explain how Jesus counters the greed and ambition of the disciples by giving them the example of the child. How are children today an example of what Jesus wants to teach us? What about children who sue their parents in court for malpractice in the mistakes they made bring the up?! What about children who have become bitter because of the abuses they have suffered? Are there still innocent children in our families?

3. Contrast the views of popular culture with those of the Gospel concerning the “haves” and the “have nots.” Those who rate and those who do not. In our society, who are the people of prestige? Those who are humble or those who walk all over everyone else? Whom do you admire? The sports stars who make \$15 million or people like Mother Teresa, who give her very life for the poor? What about your parents? Do you admire them?

## **PRAYER**

Gather your group in a circle, imagining you are a family escaping from your homeland to the United States. Pray Psalm 54 together.

## CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

The sin of pride strikes at the heart of the Christian life. Wanting to be, on our own terms and under our own power, what we ourselves want to be, in opposition to what God wants for us: that is the pride of life that wrecks the harmony God intends for the human family and for the Christian community.

St. John Cassian and St. Gregory the Great located pride among the capital sins - that is those sins that become a source of other sins. Pride leads to envy, a disorder of the soul that drives a person to sadness over someone else's success or blessing. The *catechism* says that pride can lead to the hatred of God. Such is the case of those who curse God for forbidding sinful pleasure and inflicting punishment for sin.

Christian humility requires that we always be aware of the source of our blessings, the origin of all our assets. An attitude of self-sufficiency and excessive self-reliance comes from the false belief that we have given ourselves all that we have; that God is not the loving giver of material and spiritual goods in all dimensions of life.

In the recent past, some spiritual teachings brought people to believe that God required them to deny their human dignity and to allow others to despise and to mistreat them. Some even went so far as to allow the Church or its personnel to abuse them because the victim was supposed to be somehow inferior. Those who hold office in the Church by right of ordination and those who exercise ministry by appointment are in no way superior to those whom they serve. Rank does not grant power to abuse. Christian humility should not be misconstrued as to allow abuse and victimization.

Pride can be a virtue when it is seen as the energy that motivates us to assert our God-given dignity and to drive our quest for fulfilling our God-given destiny.

**See Catechism: # 1866, 2094, 2540**

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