

**ECHOING GOD’S WORD
IN
THE CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY
TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

October 17, 2021

SCRIPTURES:

Isaiah 53:10-11	The Suffering Servant takes our pain upon himself.
Hebrews 4:14-16	The new High Priest shares our human condition.
Mark 10:35-45	Disciples must put away personal ambition.
Psalms 33:4-5,18-20,22	God watches over us with love.

SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND:

Isaiah:

Taken from the fourth “Servant Song”: in Isaiah, we hear again how the Servant of God represents us all in assuming our ills though he was himself sinless. The culture said that suffering was the result of personal sin. The prophet says that even God’s righteous Servant will suffer because God wants the Servant’s faithfulness to show forth. The Servant will bear witness to the overarching purposes of God, over and above our human purposes. To serve God faithfully is itself the fulfillment of God’s will.

Hebrews:

The High Priest of the Jewish Temple, once each year, passed through the curtain of the Temple and entered the Holy of Holies to make offerings for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:1-19). Jesus, the new High Priest, who passed through the heavens, has entered into the very presence of God to make intercessions for us. We can be confident that we, too, have access to the Throne of Majesty since Jesus in his humanity has taken our human nature with himself as he entered into the glory of God.

Mark:

In the Gospel of Mark, this whole section is concerned with teaching the disciples. Jesus uses every occasion to communicate, both by his words and by his own example, what the role of a disciple needs to be in this new kingdom that he has come to inaugurate.

This time, the teaching is about being a servant. People of worldly interests and world pursuits do not aspire to become servants. But those who want to be Jesus’ followers do! Being great and acceding to power will come to those who are willing to suffer the cross of their own lives in obedience to the heavenly Father. The greatness and the power of which Jesus speaks is quite different from what the culture of those days and these days would value. The Gospel of Jesus Christ consists in an utter reversal of the values of society.

Being considered great by the values of the culture in which we live comes oftentimes

from exercising a lot of power over people. Jesus says that in his kingdom, it is just the opposite: It is by becoming a servant of others that we become great.

“Drinking the cup” is an image from the Jewish Scriptures which means “sharing intimately in the joys or sorrows of the one with whom you drink.” Are we willing to drink of Jesus’ cup? Can we join in his sorrows and in his dying for the sake of others?

Back in Chapter 9, verse 35, Jesus had introduced this topic of the reversal of the order of priority. Who ranks first? In the world? In the kingdom? Who ranks first today in the Church? Pope Francis? Your mother and father? Look at the average parish and tell me who is the greatest person there: the person who is always doing things for others, that’s who!

Identifying with the Servant of Isaiah 50:10-12, Jesus will offer his life “in ransom” for us.

Mark wanted the people for whom he was writing to get the message that the way to be considered important in the Church consisted in becoming the helper of others.

PRAYER

Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God,
have mercy on me a sinner!

St. Francis of Assisi

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever heard of some Church leaders who craved recognition and sought influence among “big shots” in industry, in business, or in politics? Some parish priests play golf only with wealthy people because these people buy them drinks and pay their country club membership for them. What do you think of this practice? If it is not right for priests to do this, is it all right for laypeople to seek favors like this?

2. When the Church gets too rich and too powerful, God strips it bare so that it might begin again and be more what Christ wanted it to be. Do you agree that this should happen to the Church? To your parish? To your parish priest?

3. What evidence do you see that leaders in your groups, your family, your parish, your school, are actually and truly trying to serve others for the sake of Christ? How can you tell what their motives are? What are your motives when you try to help someone else?

4. What are your motives going to be when you choose a career or a vocation for your future life?

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE

The idea of the Imitation of Christ does not need to be expressed in the language and thought forms that shaped the book attributed to Thomas à Kempis. The Church today suggests that we are called to imitate Christ in very real and contemporary ways.

Pope Benedict XVI invited us to share in all that belongs to Christ. He claimed that all of Christ's riches are for every individual and are everybody's property. We are called to share not only in his suffering but also in his glory. The gifts that have been given him by the Father are ours also because of our identification with Christ in faith and baptism. It is important to people of our time to have a sense that God loves them just as he loved Jesus, that God endows them with divine gifts just as he did Jesus, that God is present to them just as he was to Jesus. We are entitled to the same privileges before the Father that Jesus enjoyed. Did he not invite us to prayer with him "Our Father?"

"In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate; through his prayer, he has drawn us to prayer; and by his poverty, he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way." Humility, prayer, and poverty are characteristics of the truly converted Christian. The people of our times are startled into awareness that God is at work in the lives of persons who exhibit real humility of spirit, living in utter simplicity of surroundings, attire and accommodations.

Prayerful persons are those whose lives are focused on God, not necessarily those who say long prayers. Those who live in the presence of God are in constant dialogue with God. How can you live with someone and not talk to him/her most of the time, day in and day out? Their prayer is a constant conversation with the One whom they love, an exchange of hearts, a sharing of concerns.

Jesus Christ lived in our flesh. He has taken us to himself in his joys and in his sorrows. He has taken us with himself to the Throne of Glory.

See: The *Catechism* # 519, 520, 521

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