

29th Sunday of the Year B

*I call upon you, God, for you will answer me;
bend your ear and hear my prayer.
Guard me as the pupil of your eye;
hide me in the shade of your wings. (Ps 16:6.8)*



First Reading

Isaiah 53:10-11

The Lord has been pleased to crush him with suffering. If he offers his life in atonement, he shall see his heirs, he shall have a long life and through him what the Lord wishes will be done. His soul's anguish over he shall see the light and be content. By his sufferings shall my servant justify many, taking their faults on himself.

Second Reading

Hebrews 4:14-16

Since in Jesus, the Son of God, we have the supreme high priest who has gone through to the highest heaven, we must never let go of the faith that we have professed. For it is not as if we had a high priest who was incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us; but we have one who has been tempted in every way that we are, though he is without sin. Let us be confident, then, in approaching the throne of grace, that we shall have mercy from him and find grace when we are in need of help.

Jesus called the Twelve to him and said to them, "You know that among the pagans their so-called rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Meditation

Jesus has just told his disciples for the third time that he is going to Jerusalem to suffer and to die. Apparently recovering from their initial fear, James and John ignore the threat of hardship and focus on the promise of glory to follow. Ambition gains the upper hand. The sons of Zebedee claim the best places in the messianic kingdom to come. The evangelist does not report that the others took any part in this discussion. But they too had argued on the way from Caesarea to Capernaum over who was the most important among them. They all seem sure that they have whatever qualifications are necessary to bask in the reflected glory of their master when he comes into his own.

Jesus assures them that indeed they will enter with him into glory, but not on their terms. It is not their own importance that will win them a place in the kingdom. It is their fidelity to the example of the Master who has come "not to be served but to serve – to give his life in ransom for the many." Only those who share in his service and his suffering for the sake of others will share also in the triumph of his resurrection. Even then, they will have done nothing to earn seats at his right hand or his left. Ultimately, all salvation is a gift from God, who gives both perseverance in the suffering and its reward.

Jesus does not condemn ambition. He redirects it. His disciples must seek not glory but servanthood for the sake of the many.

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Gospel

Mark 10:35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus. "Master," they said to him "we want you to do us a favour." He said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" They said to him, "Allow us to sit one at your

right hand and the other at your left in your glory." "You do not know what you are asking" Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup that I must drink, or be baptised with the baptism with which I must be baptised?" They replied, "We can." Jesus said to them, "The cup that I must drink you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I must be baptised you shall be baptised, but as for seats at my right hand or my left, these are not mine to grant: they belong to those to whom they have been allotted." When the other ten heard this they began to feel indignant with James and John, so Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that among the pagans their so-called rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

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