

## 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

### GOSPEL

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After leaving the mountain, Jesus and his disciples made their way through Galilee; and he did not want anyone to know, because he was instructing his disciples; he was telling them, 'The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men; they will put him to death; and three days after he has been put to death he will rise again.' But they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him.

They came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' They said nothing because they had been arguing which of them was the greatest. So he sat down, called the Twelve to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all.' He then took a little child, set him in front of them, put his arms round him, and said to them, 'Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

(Mark 9:30–37)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- Capernaum was a town on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was the home town of Peter and some of the other apostles. Jesus used Capernaum as his 'home base' during his ministry in the region of Galilee. The 'house' referred to in this text may well have been the house of Simon Peter, where we know Jesus spent time (Mark 1:29).
- 'The Son of Man' is a title Jesus often uses of himself in Mark's Gospel.
- In sitting down to instruct the disciples about being of service to others, Jesus is reinforcing his words about being the least. At that time, a teacher had greater status than his students. The normal practice was for students to sit at the feet of the teacher, not the other way around.
- In the ancient world, children had no status at all, but Jesus puts a child before them and embraces him in welcome. This is another gesture of reversal.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

In earlier texts in Mark, Jesus had already introduced the disciples to the fact that he must suffer and die but that he would rise after three days. They do not understand this talk. Even after the extraordinary events of the transfiguration, just preceding this text, they do not understand. This text reconfirms the disciples' confusion. For Jesus, the die is cast. He is fully aware of his ultimate fate and he is at pains to ensure that his followers understand why it is necessary for him to die. He takes them aside, away from the crowd for private instruction, but still they do not understand. Perhaps they do not want to! The disciples wanted Jesus to be a messiah in the line of David—a liberator who will restore Israel to greatness—but Jesus makes it clear that this is not the plan. They do not want to question him further. They are afraid of the truth that the messiahship of Jesus is the messiahship of service rather than of great pomp or celebrity. It is not about being first but about being least. The great kingdom that the disciples want is not the kingdom of Jesus. In drawing the child to himself in an embrace, Jesus is telling the disciples that they must be open, trusting and receptive, as children are, rather than devising their own version of what the kingdom of God is like and expecting God to conform to that.

- Are there times when we expect God to conform to what we want?
- What would we have God do for us?
- Is this different from what God would have us do for him?
- How can you become more 'child-like'—that is, open and trusting—in your faith?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- 'They did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask.' Are there questions you would like to ask or things you would like to have clarified? Don't be afraid to ask!
- How have you welcomed Jesus into your life so far?
- Have there been times in your life when you were afraid to find out the truth? Have there been things you had rather not known about? Why was that? What happened when you found out?
- Do you find it difficult to 'make yourself last'? Share your reflections together.
- Try to empty yourself this week of the desire to be in control. Look for ways of being of service to others. Perhaps spend time with and learn from a child. What can we learn of faith from the example of children?
- This week's psalm makes a suitable prayer:

*O God, save me by your name;  
by your power uphold my cause.  
O God, hear my prayer;  
listen to the words of my mouth.  
The Lord upholds my life.*

