

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

GOSPEL

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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.'

(Mark 10:35-45)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The brothers James and John, sons of Zebedee, were nicknamed by Jesus 'sons of thunder'.
- Acts 12:2 reports the martyrdom of James. He was killed, probably by decapitation, by Herod Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great, during a persecution of the early Church.
- According to some traditions, John survived until the end of the first century and lived in Ephesus.

EXPLORING THE WORD

On three occasions, Jesus has told his disciples of his approaching passion and death (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34). Here James and John enthusiastically, if somewhat naively, commit themselves to following him in drinking the cup and undergoing the baptism that Jesus faces. Do they really understand the cost of discipleship? Their question to Jesus would indicate that they have still not fully grasped what it means to follow Jesus. They want him to do their will rather than them doing the will of the Father. They still seem to be thinking in terms of a political and earthly kingdom, where power and riches will come to those who are in special places of favour at the right and left hand of the ruler. Instead, Jesus offers them a share in his suffering and death. The other disciples too display their human weakness in their indignation that they may be left out. Jesus tries again to make it clear to his foolish disciples that their view of the world, locked as it is in their earthly experience, is not how God plans things to be. Christianity is not a state where power and authority are lorded over others. Instead it is a call to service and humility, and may come at great cost.

- Have you had to pay a price for seeking to become a disciple of Jesus? What 'cup' have you had to drink?
- It is often in serving others that we learn something about ourselves or experience a renewed sense of purpose. Have you experienced this?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- 'What is it you want me to do for you?' How might you respond to this question from Jesus at this point on your journey?
- What do you think your baptism will mean for you?
- 'Can you drink the cup that I must drink?' Have you ever had to do something that you were really dreading? Reflect on how you faced this challenge and where you got your courage from. What was the outcome? Did you rise to the challenge? Share your reflections with others.
- Perform an act of service each day this week.
- Pray the prayer of St Ignatius Loyola:

*Lord Jesus teach me to be generous,
to serve you as you deserve to be served,
to give without counting the cost,
to fight without heeding the wounds,
to work without seeking rest,
to spend my life without expecting any other return
than the knowledge that I do your will.*

