

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 17/18, 2009
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On this 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time we hear a message that tells us that if we wish to have true greatness we must become small, that is, put ourselves on the same level as the “little ones”. We must become a servant who sacrifices our own comfort for the good of others.

In our Gospel, the naked ambition of James and John is described. Mark is telling us that neither one of these gentlemen was a saint while on their road to salvation. They were surely guilty of wanting the spotlight, but also they possessed a faith in Jesus that was overwhelming. And Mark’s point is that it is with such human characters as these that Christ conquered the world. So, Mark is telling us that there is a place and a job for each of us, with all our human faults, in the divine plan

This message is for all of us because even the most laid-back among us have some desire for greatness. This desire is God-given! It distinguishes us from all other animals. Of Course, the devil can twist this desire into something horribly destructive, but that does not negate the goodness of the basic impulse. We wonder what it would be like to be a great surgeon, a great lector, a great singer or a great deacon.

We all let our imagination run-on about greatness, but very few make the sacrifice to achieve it.

Jesus spells out the price for true greatness;

Not puffing oneself up, but by accepting some deflation.

Not by talking about oneself, but by listening to others.

Not by using others, but by allowing oneself to be used.

In a word, by becoming a servant!

Jesus in effect redefines greatness.

A person does not become great by making a million dollars. That person does it by spending time with those the world considers little. True greatness involves fatherhood and motherhood, spiritual fatherhood and motherhood, bringing out the potential in people of all ages and of all needs. As a recent Nobel Prize winner observed, fatherhood (motherhood) does not end with conception.

The Lord understands our failures, our limitations, our fears, the times that we lack confidence in ourselves to do His work. He sees this, but he also sees so much more. He sees our gifts! He sees our talents! He sees our Love! He sees our determination to be good people!

All of us have different gifts. And with these gifts comes a responsibility to develop them in service to the Lord.

What can I do best, is the question we need to ask ourselves. Some people are capable of caring for the incarcerated with mercy, compassion and justice. Others can do that for the sick, still others for the poor. Some are capable of teaching, others of being parents to those orphaned by the circumstances of their lives.

We all have many talents. They are given to us to serve others. We are all called to develop these talents. That is how we give back to the Lord a little of what he has given to us.

In our parish we call that **“stewardship”**.

The beauty and completeness of God’s kingdom will not be realized without the unique service of each disciple, regardless of how exalted or how lowly the service may be in the eyes of the world. What is essential to see is that the service Jesus invites us to do is the way of love , the way towards salvation.

The sad truth is that far too many of us want to do as little as possible. We want to be God’s grandchildren, not his children. Not because we wish to do harm to anyone, but because we are afraid that we don’t know what we are getting into.

If we listen to the words of Paul in our 2nd reading he tells us how to get started; “So let us confidently approach the throne of grace for timely help” and the refrain from our Responsorial Psalm; “Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.”

The apostles of today’s Gospel, James and John, paid their dues and then some, they trusted in Jesus. Now is the time for us to look at ourselves, to reflect the true meaning of people who bear the name of Christian and to fill the empty sandals of those disciples of Jesus that went before us.