

Cycle B 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1, Is 53:10-11

The LORD was pleased to crush him in infirmity. If he gives his life as an offering for sin, he shall see his descendants in a long life, and the will of the LORD shall be accomplished through him. Because of his affliction he shall see the light in fullness of days; through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear.

Responsorial Psalm, Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

R. (22) Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Upright is the word of the LORD, and all his works are trustworthy. He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness, To deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Our soul waits for the LORD, who is our help and our shield. May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us who have put our hope in you.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Reading II, Heb 4:14-16

Brothers and sisters: Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin.

So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

Gospel. Mk 10:35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." He replied, "What do you wish me to do for you?" They answered him, "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" They said to him, "We can." Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared." When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John. Jesus summoned them and said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The Scriptures today tell us that God loves us so much that he became one of us, and knows our temptations, our weaknesses and our suffering. Like the disciples in today's Gospel, we too often ask without thinking. Sometimes the response comes back, "*you do not know what you are asking.*"

In the verses just before today's Gospel, Jesus is making His way to Jerusalem where He will suffer and die. The picture of all the horror He faces is fully before His eyes. He knows He will be crucified. He is beginning to give His last teachings and utter His last words to His disciples. He is quite concerned about what He will leave behind with those who have been His closest disciples over the past three years. Jesus has decided not to pull any punches with them. He's telling them straight out what's going to happen. He's going to Jerusalem He tells them, to suffer, be crucified, and to die in order to enter into a new life.

As soon as He has poured out His heart to them, two of His closest disciples, James and John, ask Him for places of privilege. Instead of asking what they could do for Him, they selfishly ask what He can do for them. It's hard to imagine the insensitivity shown by James and John. Jesus is struggling with what it means to be the Suffering Servant for mankind in obedience to His Father's wishes, and James and John decide this is just the time for them to make their selfish bids for power. How will they become, in a just few days, the Apostles that Christ was looking for? How did they rise to become the great Apostles we know they were, not just ordinary ones?

The Last Supper was no picnic. What was given at this sacred banquet was given at a terrible cost. But, it came with Christ's love and desire to be our partner throughout our lives. He wants to be yoked to us and thus help us pull our load through life. But more than that, Jesus wants to be totally and completely a part of us. He wants His body to become our body — His blood to mingle with ours. He wants to give Himself to us completely, to share His life in ours and our life in His. His is a life of self-sacrificing service and

commitment to care for us. His love of us is forever. That is how suffering becomes the wonderful gift of hope.

The disciples who would be great followed that model...and there was no other model if they were to be great...great Apostles sharing the hope of Christ.

We need to ask ourselves how we can become better Christians. You see, we need to be extraordinary Christians, because there are enough ordinary ones already. We need to be self-sacrificing and seek God in everything we do. We can't settle for less. Having Jesus in our lives is lasting – something that we can take with us into the next life, as well as being the legacy of hope we can leave with those who have known us and loved us.

Have you ever heard of the PRAYER OF AN UNKNOWN CONFEDERATE SOLDIER? This prayer was found on the body of a soldier near the end of the Civil War. Some call it the prayer of unspoken prayers. I call it the “you do not know what you are asking” prayer. It is obviously the prayer of an extraordinary and self-sacrificing follower of Christ. Let us pray:

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve; I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey...

I asked for health, that I might do greater things; I was given infirmity, that I might do better things...

I asked for riches, that I might be happy; I was given poverty, that I might be wise...

I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men; I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God...

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life, I was given life, that I might enjoy all things...

I got nothing that I asked for...but everything I had hoped for...

Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.

I am, among all men, most richly blessed...Amen