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“It shall not be so among you” (Mark 10:43).

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Is 53:10-11; Ps 33; Heb 4:14-16; Mark 10:35-45

If we gather all the details about the Apostles James and John from the Gospels, we find that they were among the first to be called, leaving their father and boats on the shore of the Sea of Galilee when Jesus passes by. They are both ambitious and sneaky, recruiting their mother to ask Jesus to make them his favorites. They are hot-tempered, proposing that fire be called down on a Samaritan town that does not welcome Jesus. Yet, Jesus asks them, along with the bombastic, ambivalent Peter, to accompany him when he is transfigured, when he raises the daughter of Jairus and when he prays in the garden of Gethsemane while they sleep nearby.

The prominence of these three among the Apostles reveals something of Jesus' preference for colorful personalities despite their faults, perhaps why he chose fishermen for his inner circle rather than scribes of the Law or professional religious to follow him. They will learn not from sacred scrolls but firsthand from the Word himself, just how mysterious God is to send a suffering servant instead of a holy warrior to transform the world.

Today's Gospel shows what slow learners they and the other Apostles were, still competing for rank even after Jesus had repeatedly warned them that suffering and rejection awaited him in Jerusalem. Preparing them to drink the cup he will drink and share the baptism he will face became the central lesson that Jesus' disciples

would eventually learn, but only after the fact, when his death and resurrection revealed that suffering and service are the true path to glory.

In John's Gospel, Jesus will provide a symbol equated with the Eucharist by kneeling to wash the feet of his Apostles, including James, John, Peter, and even Judas, his betrayer, as his final lesson before dying.

This is the lifelong classroom for all disciples in a world where winners dominate and losers are humiliated, where success is rewarded with fame and failure with obscurity. To be a servant in the community often waits for an obituary to be acknowledged, while self-styled messiahs dominate the headlines and manipulate the media limelight *ad nauseum*.

We become James and John today as we listen to Mark's Gospel, asking Jesus to let us remain close to him as he completes his role as suffering servant. And as he surely did in calling them, Jesus looks at us with love and invites us to share his cup and baptism as suffering servants, promising us the same glory he revealed by his death and resurrection.

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