

Every year, we celebrate the World Mission Sunday on the second-to-last Sunday of October. On World Mission Sunday, Our Holy Father, through the Pontifical Mission Societies, asks us to remember and to support the mission work being done around the world in over 1,150 mission territories. It is a day to thank Missionaries for their love and dedication to Christ's Mission. It is also a day we thank all those who support Missionaries and their mission Christ has called them to do. Many thanks to you all for all you do for us missionaries and the missions we serve. We're blessed to have each and every one of you as our co-partners in our missionary work.

Pope Francis has chosen this year's theme as "Go and invite everyone to the banquet"- Mt 22:9. As you may see, Jesus' invitation is universal, meaning everyone is welcome to the feast of the Eucharist and to the ultimate banquet in the kingdom of God. It also implies everyone, not just missionaries, is called to spread the good news of Jesus. We're all missionaries by the virtue of our baptism. This year, Pope Francis encourages us to consider how the work of the Missions is at the heart of invitation and hospitality.

The first reading is taken from the fourth of the Servant Songs of Second Isaiah. The Servant of the Lord takes upon himself the sins of his people. So, he becomes a source of blessings for them all. The early Christians, reflecting on this passage of Isaiah, saw Jesus as the perfect Servant of God who truly gave his whole life in the service of God and his brothers and sisters. Hence, the first reading helps us to understand and appreciate the Gospel reading.

In the Gospel reading, Mark tells us the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with a request that he should grant them in his glory, to sit one at his right and the other on his left. We read a similar request in the Gospel of Matthew 20:20-28, except that in Matthew, it was their mother who made the request to Jesus on behalf of her two sons. Some Biblical scholars are of the view that Matthew did so to place James and John in a better spot before the other apostles. Jesus reminded them that they did not know what they're asking for. Then he posed this question to them: "Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" The "cup" and the "baptism" referred to Jesus' passion and death on the Cross.

Are you surprised to see the apostles looking for power, position, and authority in Jesus' Kingdom? Many of us, if not all, also look for recognition, fame, power, and authority to control the lives of others. We fail to understand that we are called to serve and not to be served. One can see/read three answers that Jesus gave to James and John's request, namely:

First: A place in the kingdom demands suffering and even death for some of his disciples if you want to be his true disciples.

The **second** answer is that it is not Jesus' prerogative/right to determine status in the coming of his Kingdom. It is his heavenly Father's sole prerogative/right to decide that.

Thirdly, leadership in Jesus' community, meaning Christian community, means humble and loving service to others. In the secular world, greatness means success in business, having a charming personality, physical beauty, etc. Jesus gives us a contrary view of what greatness means in his Kingdom, namely, you must be servant of all. As Mark reminds us so beautifully in the Gospel reading: "FOR THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED BUT TO SERVE AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY." Yes, Jesus gives another instance of humble service during his Last Supper with the disciples. He washed the feet of his future apostles and asked them to do the same to others, just as he has done for them. Jesus, the high Priest as the letter to the Hebrews described him, has been tested in every way, yet without sin. He understands and knows us so we must not be afraid to approach him for help. It is believed the author of the letter to the Hebrews was writing to Christians of Jewish origin. The Jewish high priest entered the sanctuary in Jerusalem temple to offer sacrifice to God on behalf of his people. We Christians are blessed to have the Son of God, Jesus Christ, as our high priest who is in the sanctuary of heaven praying for us.

Let always remember that Jesus has called us not to be served but to serve him and our brothers and sisters. That is what will make us great in his heavenly kingdom. May our Holy Mother Mary and her beloved husband, St. Joseph, continue to pray for us to faithfully serve their Son, Jesus, and his Church. Amen