

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Father Ed's Homily

Theme: Humility, a fundamental aspect of Christian Character

The first reading of this 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time is taken from the Book of Wisdom which is one of the seven books of the Old Testament. It is only found in the Catholic and Orthodox Bibles, not found in the Protestant Bibles. It was written about 50 B.C in Alexandria, Egypt, a port city rich with Greek culture. Some Jews who were living there were very strict with their Jewish faith. But some of them compromised their Jewish faith with pagan culture which led to friction and violence among them. These faithful Jews, the just ones as described by the author of the Book of Wisdom, suffered in the hands of the unfaithful Jews and the pagans in Alexandria. The early Christian community applied this passage in the first reading to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah. He is truly the just Servant, par excellence.

In today's Gospel, St. Mark presents us with the second prediction of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus as we heard in his last week Gospel's reading: "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men, and they will kill him, and three days after his death, the Son of Man will rise." As Mark tells us: "But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to question him." Why were they afraid to question him? They were fighting instead over who would be the greatest among them. I am sure they were ashamed when Jesus heard their conversation. Jesus used this unfortunate occasion to teach them again that his true disciples must be the last and servants of all. They must also remember that suffering and service as parts of the life of true disciples. They must have the virtue of humility as part of the requirement of discipleship. He used a child to teach them this great lesson.

As we know, a child in the Bible is a symbol of innocence, humility, and dependence on others. In ancient times, children also had no legal status, hence, helpless. These characters of a child must be the characters of Jesus' disciples and all of us Christians. So, to receive a child is to perform a good act for a helpless person, without hope of earthly reward. Hence, whoever receives a child receives Jesus and whoever receives Jesus receives God who sent him. You will receive your reward in heaven for your kindness and love for children, meaning the poor, weak, and helpless in society.

These bad behaviors of the disciples, namely seeking superior places in Jesus' kingdom, reflect what we read in the second reading. St. James reminds us that jealousy and selfish ambition lead to disorder, disharmony in community. As disciples of Christ, we are called to live in peace and harmony with one another. Again, humility must be part of our daily life. False ambition destroys community, but true ambition builds a healthy community because its ultimate desire/goal is to serve others especially the poor and weak in our community. We are all aware of many families, organizations, etc. that are falling apart because of lack of humility. The ones who are humble and lowly of heart are those who will inherit the Kingdom of God. Jesus, himself, is the best model for us all.

During this week, let us reflect on the virtue of humility, a fundamental aspect of our Christian life. Are you ready to humble yourself and serve as Jesus did?

May Holy Mother Mary and her beloved husband, St. Joseph, intercede for us to serve Jesus Christ and those who society looks down upon.