

Ordinary Time 29B 2015

A Life of Service to Others

We live in a world where everyone wants to be a winner; where everyone wants to be first, and nobody wants to be last. Being last means being a loser, the great disgrace of our time. We live in a world that tells us to be number one, a world that prizes being important as more important than serving others.

We also live in another world—or at least we profess to live in another world. We live in the world of the gospel, a world in which Christ teaches us that whoever wishes to be great must be the servant of all, whoever wishes to be first must be the slave of all. We live in a world in which Jesus, our Lord and Savior, did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

And so we are between two worlds that compete for our allegiance. And because we live between these two worlds, we are often conflicted and divided. Week after week we hear the gospel proclaim the way of Jesus Christ, the way of suffering and service for others, and we seek to live that gospel in our lives, otherwise we would not be here. But we are told by the world in which we live that this gospel, for all of its beauty, is unrealistic. We are told to assert ourselves, to make our influence felt, to be number one.

The conflict we experience is not something new. James and John followed Jesus for nearly three years. They heard what he taught about the kingdom of God. They knew that in the kingdom of God the first will be last, and last will be first. But they could not resist asking Jesus for the seats of honor at his right and left. They didn't want the other disciples to get ahead of them; nor did the other disciples want James and John to rule over them. And so, already, before Jesus had suffered and died, his chosen disciples were arguing who was the most important.

It is difficult to put the gospel into practice because it challenges us to trust in the love and mercy of God rather than the power and strength that the world prizes. It is difficult to put the gospel into practice because it proclaims that the power and wisdom of God is found in what the world counts as weak and foolish. The gospel challenges us to live in a *new* way so that we can enter the *new* world of the kingdom of God.

Consider today's first reading, which speaks of a mysterious figure who brings salvation by suffering for others. Consider today's second reading that describes Jesus as a great priest who can sympathize with our weakness because he has endured every temptation. Consider Jesus, the Son of God, who did not come to be served but to serve.

Now consider what a powerful witness St. Mary's parish would be to the people of Simsbury if we modeled our lives after the life of Jesus. Consider what a powerful sign each one of us would be, if we modeled ourselves after Jesus who came not to be served but to serve.

According to worldly standards, Jesus was a loser, a failure because he endured the shameful of the cross and was rejected by the most respectable people of his day. But we confess that he is our Lord and Savior who has healed us by his suffering. By coming as the servant of God he has shown us how to live in a way that prepares us to live in the kingdom of heaven, where the first will be last and the last will be first, and every loser will be a winner.