

**25<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – B; Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024**  
**Wisdom 2: 12, 17-20; James 3: 16-4: 3; Mk. 9: 30-37**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

As it is the natural tendency in us, we *seek position, honor, recognition and comforts in every situation, no matter, what happens to others*. During the time of Jesus the scribes and Pharisees looked for place of honor wherever they went and applause from people for their piety. Today's gospel passage shows that even the disciples of Jesus were not free from such tendencies.

According to Mark's gospel Jesus makes three predictions about his Passion and Death, in chapters 8, 9 and 10. Last Sunday we heard the first prediction of Jesus near Caesarea Philippi and also saw the futile attempt of Peter who persuaded Jesus to change the fate. In today's gospel Jesus gives the second prediction of his Passion and Death. It is a bit shocking to notice how insensitive the apostles were to such a serious matter! Instead of giving attention to what Jesus was telling them, they were busy in arguing among themselves as who would be the greatest among them? In other words, their worry was about as who would be chosen by Jesus to be the Secretary of State or Defense in his new cabinet.

So Jesus makes use of this occasion to teach them a great lesson on service and the secret of greatness. He invites a child among them and emphatically confirms that the one who can welcome and serve a little child like this will be great in the world and before God. What does Jesus mean by serving a little child? We know the nature of a child. A child is vulnerable and prone to any danger; cannot do anything without the help of somebody; unable to offer anything to someone rather can only receive. In a way the child is so helpless and dependent. **So Jesus affirms that true greatness consists in serving the helpless and less fortunate ones who are badly in need of help.** This is what Jesus did during his public ministry. He served the less fortunate even forgetting his personal comfort and rest. Jesus says in today's gospel, **"If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all."**

The world has seen thousands of emperors, politicians, executives and movie stars. But many of them were only famous while they were living and active. Once dead, they were simply buried in the pages of history. People don't bother about them any longer. But there are a few people in the world, though dead still live in the hearts of millions of people all over the world. **They are the ones who attracted the people not by their glamour; rather by their sacrifice and efforts to lift up the**

**downtrodden and the abandoned.** Every generation has witnessed a few such great people who will never die, so far mankind exists in the world.

On March 3, 1976, while conferring to Mother Theresa the highest honor of the *Vishwa Bharati University in India*, the then Prime minister of India, Indira Gandhi, the iron lady of her time, commented, **“I feel myself dwarfed when I stand before this holy and mighty woman who heroically showed the world how to practice Christian love in sacrificial and humble service.”** If Mother Theresa had continued in the comforts of the Loreto Convent as a school teacher, nobody would have heard of her except her students and fellow nuns. But today, she is great before men and God for she served the childlike, the helpless and the poor people in the slums of Calcutta and outside. Mother Theresa started her humble service in the slums in the early 50s, but nobody gave any attention to it; rather she met with a lot of oppositions from the local people. But only in the early 70s the world gave any attention to the great service she was doing to the suffering humanity. Though she was honored with Nobel Prize and with many awards, she remained the Mother Theresa of the 50s till she died.

It is very clear that those who try to make themselves great in the world may remain great in the eyes of a few till their death. Tony Campolo, the author writes, *“If you ever start to feel proud, thinking that you are somebody great, just remember that soon after your body has been lowered into the grave, your family and friends will be eating potato salad and telling jokes and you’ll be history.”* But, the one who becomes great before God by their humble service will be great in the world too. Jesus says in **Luke 14: 11, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”** Greatness, in the view of Jesus is found in our willingness to accept and welcome and serve those who are in need. If you and I can make a little difference in somebody’s life by our words and deeds we will be great before the Lord and the world too will recognize us. Please remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 25: 40, **Amen, I say to you whatever you did for the one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”** My friends, our life is very short, if we can add a little joy to someone’s life before we leave, we will be called blessed by the Lord.