

**29<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – B: Oct. 20<sup>th</sup> 2024**  
**Isaiah 53:10-11; Hebrews 4:14-16; Mark 10:35-45**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Though Jesus chose his disciples personally, the gospels give the story of only a few as how they were called by Jesus. We are amazed by the immediate response they gave to Jesus. For instance, Peter, Andrew, John and James left their fishing career, net and boat on the shore of Tiberius and followed Jesus. Matthew left his tax office in the middle of the working day in response to the call of Jesus. The rest of the 12 too may have similar experience. At the same time we should not be under the impression that these men were spiritually influenced by the charismatic preaching of Jesus before they followed him. In fact, they said ‘yes’ to Jesus with a material ambition. And also they felt honored by Jesus. We should know the reason of that. During the time of Jesus there were quite a few rabbis in the Jewish community. Now and then when a new one emerged, the first thing he would do was to choose some men to be their disciples. The rabbi would be very careful in choosing the men. First of all he would see that these men enjoyed good social and religious status in the community. For those young men it was a moment of pride and prestige to be chosen by a rabbi.

We have to compare the call of the disciples with this custom. When Jesus called the twelve to be his disciples they were very excited to be chosen by a young rabbi. For, they were of very low social standing. Those days the fishermen, tax collectors and zealots were condemned by the elite class of people. Secondly, seeing the great miracles of Jesus, they thought that indeed Jesus would be the next king of Palestine and as such they expected the high positions in his cabinet. In a way, with a hidden agenda in heart they followed Jesus.

The power struggle among the disciples was not something new and now and then it came out in the open. Mark gives us clear indication of their fight for the first place and position. On 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, we heard in Mark chapter 9, how the disciples were arguing among them as who would be the greatest and how Jesus showed them in what they have to seek the greatness. If we closely follow Mark’s gospel chapters 9 and 10, we see Mark dealing with man’s struggles for *pleasure, possession and power*. In this Sunday’s gospel the *power struggle* of the disciples come out in the open through the shameful demand of the two brothers, James and John who were the cousins of Jesus and also were in the inner circle of Jesus. The request made by these brothers, seeking the place on the right and left of Jesus in his *glory* doesn’t mean that they were looking forward to the heavenly kingdom of Jesus. They were under the impression that Jesus would be establishing the political kingdom in Palestine soon and

the duo wanted to secure a place of honor in the department of ministries. The reaction of the other disciples against John and James shows clearly that they too were keeping an eye on the same positions. It is very scandalous to see that this incident took place during the last journey of Jesus to Jerusalem where he was going to die shortly.

But the message of Jesus is very consistent and clear, especially when the disciples followed their private agenda and pursued their personal ambitions. Jesus, though everything was possible for him in this world, took the form of a suffering servant as Isaiah prophesied in his servant songs and made use of his desires for pleasure, power and possessions for the salvation of the mankind. Similarly, Jesus expects every disciple to follow the path of sharing and sacrifice. If the world has developed to this level, spiritually, materially and scientifically, it is thanks to the great sacrifice and service of many great men and women who willingly sacrificed their pleasure, power and possessions for the humanity. These men and women were the seeds which fell on the ground and died, so that they could produce more fruits.

Jesus makes it very clear that if they would like to become great, the only option they had was to be the servants of all. If they would like to become first, they should be the slaves of all. This is what Jesus did through his life and death. The disciples who witnessed the sacrifice of Jesus finally could overcome their evil desires and learned where they had to look for greatness. In other words, they became more givers than takers. They who wanted to be first opted to be last; they who wished to be served became servants of all. Christianity is the religion of giving than taking. Christians are supposed to focus on more in giving than taking. If you have wealth and power you can be popular among people; but that popularity will end up in the grave with you. On the other hand if you want to be great and live longer in the hearts of people, you should try to make a positive change in the community. It is said, **“The greatness of a man is not in how much wealth he acquires, but in his integrity and his ability to affect those around him positively.”** In other words, be a servant of all and be counted to be the last.