

SUNDAY REFLECTIONS – 29th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME Year B
21st OCTOBER 2018

'Building Bridges



GOSPEL MARK 10:35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Jesus and said to him, 'Master, we want you to do us a favour.' He replied, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' They said to him, 'Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I shall drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I shall be baptized?' They replied, 'We can.' Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I shall drink, you shall drink, and with the baptism with which I shall be baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been allotted.' When the other ten heard this, they became indignant with James and John, so Jesus called them to him and said to them, 'You know that among the gentiles those they call their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority felt. Among you this is not to happen. No, anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be the slave to all. For the Son of man himself came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

TO PONDER:

- Why were the disciples so anxious to take the first places?
- On what does Jesus base service in the community?
- Can you see in today's world an emerging, prophetic movement which challenges the structures of power?

REFLECTION ON THE GOSPEL

In the kingdom of God movement established by Jesus, there is no place for domination or for any exercise of power over others. In today's gospel story, this is a lesson that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, clearly need to learn. They seem to think that the structures of power operating in the Roman world are going to be replicated when Jesus conquers the forces of opposition and comes into his "glory".

The two brothers, James and John, put in a bid for shared deputy leadership positions. They seem to be blind and deaf to what Jesus has been trying to tell them throughout their journey from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem. They seek his patronage without reference to the rest of the leadership group who, incidentally, are not well pleased with their presumptuous companions.

James and John do not yet realise that Jesus' way is not the way of status or entitlement and that their call as disciples and as leaders of the emerging movement has nothing to do with privilege. They need to understand that it has more to do with enduring the suffering associated with commitment to one's mission, and with setting others free to be their best selves.

To demonstrate this, Jesus offers them an unpalatable alternative: to "be slave of all". He sustains the slavery metaphor and goes on to summarise his own mission with an image that comes out of the world of his time: "not to be served but to serve and give life as a ransom for many".

A ransom was the payment made to free someone from slavery. To substitute oneself for a slave was to give one's life as a ransom for that slave. Reading the gospel from beginning to end helps us to understand the ultimate self-giving of Jesus in death as the climax of a lifetime's outpouring of love, a love that draws forth loving and liberating action in others.

There are multiple ways of enslaving others, of dominating and of trying to control them in order to achieve one's own personal or corporate ends, good or bad. The request of James and John reminds us that we can all lose sight of the liberating vision of the gospel and get caught up in destructive power struggles.

As 21st century disciples, we hear the words of Jesus, 'It is not to happen with you'. We might turn our attention to those in our world who are literally enslaved. We might join with ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious against the Trafficking in Humans) or with others working to obtain freedom and justice for those trapped into sexual and other forms of slavery in our own cities. We might hear today's gospel as a call to do something about this tragic phenomenon.

This Gospel reflection is a contribution by Sr Veronica Lawson, rsm.

CARMELITE TRADITION:

Carmelites are led, day by day, to know and experience the mystery of Jesus Christ. Inspired by the Spirit and rooted in Christ Jesus, abiding in him by day and by night, Carmelites allow every choice and every action to be guided by his Word. (Carmelite Constitutions)



INTERCESSIONS:

- For all church leaders, that in their service to the church and the world they hear the words of Jesus 'do not be afraid' and strive with courage and integrity to work towards healing and a spirit of collaboration for renewal and reform amongst all the baptised. We pray: **Servant God, hear our prayer.**
- For our country: may we look with confidence in a spirit of cooperation as we confront the difficult issues of our time – for peace with justice, environmental responsibility, access for all to health care, adequate shelter and education. We pray: **Servant God, hear our prayer.**
- For the United Nations in its work for international peace, development and education: may leaders of nations respect international law and vigorously renew their moral and financial support for the UN. We pray: **Servant God, hear our prayer.**
- For all refugees and asylum seekers who have died in their search for freedom from persecution and detention: we pray that Australia will adopt more flexible and humane policies towards people who are detained on Manus Island and Nauru. We pray: **Servant God, hear our prayer.**

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, superficial relationships, so that you will live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you will work for justice, equity, and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, and war, so that you will reach out your hands to comfort them and change their pain to joy.

And **God bless you** with the foolishness to think that you can make a difference in the world, so that you will do the things which others tell you cannot be done.

Source Unknown