

In our Gospel reading today from Mark, we see two of the Apostles James and John, sons of Zebedee, ask Jesus for a position of honor in heaven. What seems so very human in this scenario is how Jesus had just finished telling the Apostles for the third time that He will undergo pain, suffering and even death for the salvation of the world. The Apostles seem oblivious to His plight.

Doesn't this speak volumes about our humanity? How often are we so self-absorbed in our own lives that we fail to notice what others are going through? Our concerns take precedence over the concerns of others. I remember, when I was about ten years old, asking my mother which of her children she loved the best. Like the two Apostles in our Gospel, I was expecting a place of honor. I thought my mother would automatically say I was her favorite. My younger brother Chris was nearby as I asked this question. Chris thought he was my mother's favorite and was upset with me for even asking the question.

Years later, I realized the wisdom of my mother in the way she addressed my brother and me. She told us she liked each of her children for different reasons, and she loved all of us so much. Looking back to my question to my mother, I can imagine my brother Chris probably had every reason to be upset with me. Thinking about how the other Apostles responded to John and James, I see how indignant they must have been.

In both situations, a larger issue was being ignored. My mother was able to set the record straight. Mom also was a good example for all my brothers and sisters. She would always support the missions, and encouraged us to utilize the mite boxes. At dinner time, she would always remind us to remember those who did not have enough to eat.

Jesus explained why He could not grant John and James request; it was not His to grant. Jesus further questions John and James, asking if they could share His cup and baptism. The images refer to the suffering and death that awaits Him. Their assurance that they can share His cup and baptism, without knowing what they are committing to, is stated with the hope that in some way they will get what they desire.

Their lack of understanding is an opportunity for Jesus to teach about being of service to others. As Konrad Schaefer points out in his commentary, "True greatness lies not in wielding authority over others, but is being the servant or slave of all - a theme that dominates Jesus' teaching. Whatever authority is to be exercised by the disciple must, like that of Jesus, be rendered as service to others rather than for personal aggrandizement."

We must leave our egos at the door; do not look for accolades, rather search for ways to serve others. Take time to find out more about the Corporal Works of Mercy.

Jesus serves as an example for all. As the Gospel states, "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many."

May God bless you,

Deacon Rich