

Wednesday 8th March, 2023.

2nd Week of Lent – Cycle ‘A’

1st Reading = Jeremiah 18 :18-20

Resp Psalm = Ps 31:4-5;13 15

Gospel = Matthew 20:17-28

Just after Jesus tells His apostles of their journey towards Jerusalem and the suffering He was going to face, the mother of James and John came to lay this request at the feet of Jesus: “Command that these, my two sons, may sit, one on your right hand, and one on your left hand, in your Kingdom” (Matthew 20:21). Since these positions were the second and third most powerful seats in a kingdom (the equivalent of the prime minister and the ranking general), their request angered the other disciples. They considered it audacious and unfair. The Lord used the question as a teachable moment to answer the question of leadership, using his ministry, indeed his own life, as an example.

James and his brother, John, spoke just once in the whole passage, with a full-throated “We can!” Yet, what was in the cup that the brothers were invited to drink? Water (which is a life and specifically human life), or wine (which is a sacramental invitation to Divine life), or vinegar (which is a symbol of rejection, deceit, persecution, opposition to anything that stands for life, whether human or Divine)? The cup was Christ’s passion. They would have to suffer not only individually but as brothers, as friends of Jesus, as the Church. In life, there must be this vinegar, moments of toil and pain, persecution, killing, lying, oppression, moments when we lord it over others, moments of brutality. But if one must gain Glory, he must pass through the cross. Leadership, for Jesus then, meant service, even to the point of death. Glory could only come through suffering, resurrection only through death. Jesus warned them of the attitude that should stand in stark contrast with the Machiavellian view: “You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them” (Matthieu 20:25). As a correction to the leaders of the 21st Century, one does not grasp at leadership as the mother’ of the twin brothers thought; instead, Jesus urges us to give ourselves to lead. This is why so many have come up to the stage, lording it on others, instead of spending time serving. It will never be easy, but we must show respect to the people who helped us be there and not oppress them through the many bills in the legislature, the thwarting of the judiciary, through religious manipulation, and political manoeuvres and so on. We pray that the spirit of service may be restored in today’s leadership at all levels and that we may understand that

there must be vinegar waiting for us at our service posts, but immersing ourselves in the blood of Christ, we would drink our own share of the cup and serve with love. May St John of God, St Senan of Scattery and St Humphrey of Prum intercede for us, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

A Fruitful Lenten Season.

Fr Kevin. N. Lereh, m.ss.cc

Together in prayer.