



**TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
CYCLE B**

Isaiah 53:10-11  
Hebrews 4:14-16  
Mark 10:35-45

**GATHERING**

*(The table in the center of the gathering is set with a white cloth, a standing crucifix and a small votive candle.)*

In last week's gospel, Jesus invited the young man to sell everything he had, to give the proceeds to the poor and then to come and follow him. In this week's readings Jesus teaches us that discipleship is synonymous with service, self sacrifice and suffering. What did you give up to follow Jesus this past week? *(Members share briefly.)*

**OPENING PRAYER**

*(The community joins in singing, "The Song of St. Patrick". The song may be found on the Internet.)*

I believe, even as I say,  
"I am afflicted."  
I believe, even though I scream,  
"Everyone lies!"

What gift can ever repay  
God's gift to me?  
I raise the cup of freedom  
as I call on God's name!  
I fulfill my vows to you, Lord,  
standing before your assembly.

Lord, you hate to see  
your faithful ones die.  
I beg you, Lord, hear me:  
it is I, the servant you love,  
I, the child of your servant.  
You freed me from death's grip.

I bring a gift of thanks,  
as I call on your name.  
I fulfill my vows to you, Lord,  
standing before your assembly,  
in the courts of your house,  
within the heart of Jerusalem.

Hallelujah!

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## Focus Question

How important is recognition to you?

## SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

*(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause between readings.)*

## Commentary

There are times when each of us yearns for a little recognition, some sign of appreciation for what we do, in our careers, as moms and dads, as volunteers in our parish community or in the town we live. That's normal. Recognition and appreciation are catalysts which energize us to continue

at whatever we're doing. When our need for recognition becomes a driving need, an end in itself, a quest for our fifteen minutes of fame, then pride and ambition have taken over. It is then we can lose direction on our Christian journey.

In this week's gospel, James and John, who along with Peter comprised Jesus' inner circle, succumbed to that ambition, requesting to be at Jesus' side when he came into his glory. They wanted a special favor. Snapping them back to reality, Jesus reminded them that there would be a price to be paid. Could they drink from the same cup or be baptized in the same bath of pain as Jesus? We are reminded by Jesus that there is a cost to discipleship, that our relationship with him is not a strictly *feel good* relationship.

Thomas Merton observed:

. . . [C]hristian humility . . . teaches us to take ourselves as we are, instead of pretending (as pride would have us imagine) that we are something better than we are. If we really know ourselves we quietly take our proper place in the order designed by God . . . . Pride makes us artificial, and humility makes us real.<sup>1</sup>

Genuine humility allows us to serve others without the need for personal gain or recognition. Christian service is relational. We are grounded in God as we serve others in need. In Christian service, there is no room for our inflated ego. Our example is Jesus, the suffering servant of the first reading. He was rejected by his own but endured suffering on their behalf. He is a model to help us through the difficult times, when parenting isn't a joy, when co-workers are uncooperative or when our best efforts aren't bringing the desired results. The bumps in the road can enable us to grow in experience and knowledge, in understanding and empathy and, most importantly, in relationship with Jesus. In him God is truly human and knows our struggles. Mother Teresa noted, "God calls us to fidelity and not to success."

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpts from *No Man Is an Island* by Thomas Merton, copyright © 1955 by The Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani and renewed 1983 by the Trustees of the Merton Legacy Trust, reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace & Company.

Jesus repeatedly calls us to serve. Discipleship is not about recognition; it's about service. How do we respond to the suffering of others, the grieving, the sick, those who are struggling to find themselves? In service, as frustrating as it may be, we will encounter God, who accompanies us on our faith journey and has promised to give us the grace to get through our struggles. Only with grace can we respond to these challenges in our lives with hope and trust and love. Let us open ourselves anew to God's grace.

## **FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION**

*(The community pauses in silence for several minutes to ponder the scriptures and the questions which follow.)*

1. When has the need for recognition been a hindrance to your spiritual development?
2. Name a time when you paid a price for not promoting yourself in the workplace. What did you learn from the experience?
3. Name someone you know who is influential, but not widely recognized. How does this happen?
4. Why is it that people of service are never in the headlines as much as people of notoriety or accomplishment? Which headlines attract your attention?
5. When have you felt unsuccessful and faithful?

## **RESPONSE IN ACTION**

Suggestions:

1. Spend some quiet time this week reviewing your involvement and commitment to family, to parish, to the larger community. Choose one situation where you can make even more of a difference without drawing attention to yourself. Respond with new service.

2. Make an anonymous donation of time or money to someone in need.
3. Write a note of appreciation to someone who works behind the scenes in your parish.

## **SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER**

*(The community stands in a circle and joins hands.)*

All: Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,  
Grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console;  
To be understood as to understand;  
To be loved as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

The Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

*(The facilitator invites the mention of intentions and members respond to each, "Loving God, hear our prayer". When the intentions have run their course, the facilitator offers some closing words of prayer in the name of the whole community.)*