

Readings Wisdom 2:12, 17-20; James 3:16 - 4:3; Mark 9: 30-37



Fr Michael says:

Community Living

Today we face the ups and downs of our living in Society: with Wisdom putting before us the just man, whose righteousness is seen as a criticism of others who turn against him. Jealousy, ambition and self-seeking lead to disharmony as James reminds us, being reasonable and merciful leads to peace and harmony. The Gospel focuses on Jesus' second announcement of His Passion, which is again not understood by the disciples who are more concerned with their own ambitions: "who is the greatest among us?" Embarrassed silence! False ambition is wrong! It leads to conflict and disharmony and so damages the unity of the Community. True ambition is the desire to serve others and the best way of doing that is by caring for the little ones of Society.

We need goals to achieve, but we must be on the alert as to the effect that they can have on others. We can easily fall into the trap of wanting to manipulate and dominate others, to achieve what we want. Such is the picture we have in today's Gospel – the disciples have little understanding of Jesus and His Mission, despite all his teachings on the way to Jerusalem. Jesus calls them together to correct their perspectives. Ambition should seek to serve others, that is our true one! We can so often see the ill effects of the opposite, the greed that drove the bankers to take unjustified risks and imperil the lives and well-being of millions of people.

True greatness is to be seen in our service and especially to the less fortunate than ourselves – we will not be offered any rewards but a great feeling of well-being and satisfaction. Jesus said: "Whoever welcomes a little child, welcomes me." In Aramaic, the term for child and servant is the same, hence a stunned silence!

Welcome is a joyful service to children, but also those who are in need. Jesus' words, in Matthew's Gospel, which talk of the assessment of life as seen in love and service: "As long as you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it to me." Jesus shows us, in his work with the people and the care and attention He gave them. He ends with His supreme example at the Last Supper, when Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, He who is the Lord and Master. The challenge He gives them to do the same to others – thus fulfilling Jesus' promise of them doing even greater things than He did! Service implies that you are not there for yourself, but for others. To serve well, we have to be very self-effacing – we have to get used to being taken for granted.

God's inspiration is at work in everyone, but not everyone is able to respond, crimes may be committed; there can be a turning away from the good and beautiful – yet they still seem to prosper! Their punishment will also be in this world – fears and anxieties assail them, their very prosperity becomes bitter to them. As for the just, even though their passage through life is often dogged by misfortune, the inward satisfaction of obeying the divine inspiration gives them great strength and that is sufficient for them! May it be the same for us too!