Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Gospel text (*Mk* 10:35-45): James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." He replied, "What do you wish me to do for you?" They answered him, "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" They said to him, "We can." Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am 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 prepared."

When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John. Jesus summoned them and said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

"Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant"

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
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Today, once again, Jesus overturns our preconceived notions. Spurred by James and John, these words full of wisdom have reached us: "For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life" (Mk 10:45).

How much we enjoy being well-served! Think, for example, of how pleasing it is when public services are efficient, punctual, and tidy, or how we complain when, after paying for a service, it doesn't meet our expectations. Jesus teaches us by His example. Not only is He a servant of the Father's will, which includes our Redemption, but He also pays the price! And the price of our ransom is His blood, through which we have received salvation from our sins. What a great paradox this is, one we will never fully comprehend! He, the great King, the Son of David, the one who was to come in the name of the Lord,

“emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness… becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:7-8).

How expressive are the depictions of Christ dressed as a King nailed to the cross! In Spain, we have many of these images, referred to as the “Holy Majesty.” As a form of catechesis, we contemplate how to serve is to reign and how the exercise of any authority must always be a service.

Jesus upends the world’s categories in such a way that He also redefines the meaning of human activity. The most important task is not the one that shines the brightest but the one we undertake with the most identification with Jesus, the servant, filled with love for God and others. If we truly believe that “no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends” (Jn 15:13), then we will also strive to offer a service of human quality and professional competence in our work, filled with a deep Christian sense of service. As Saint Teresa of Calcutta said, “The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, and the fruit of service is peace.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Let us regard those boys over whom we have some authority as our own sons. Let us place ourselves in their service." (Saint John Bosco)

- “Anyone who wants to do something for others must serve. True power lies in service, and the greatest calling that a woman and a man have is that of service.” (Francis)

- "Those who exercise authority should do so as a service... The exercise of authority is measured morally in terms of its divine origin, its reasonable nature and its specific object. No one can command or establish what is contrary to the dignity of persons and the natural law.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2235)