

**Twenty Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**September 20, 2015**

In this week's gospel reading, the disciples give us a vivid demonstration of just how difficult it can be to follow Jesus. In fact, Mark gives us more evidence of one of his key themes that Jesus' disciples were pretty much a clueless bunch.

Think about it. These guys had been with Jesus night and day, week in and week out, for quite some time. They heard all the teachings on humility and selflessness, and they saw Jesus practicing what He preached. They knew that ambition and pride were never a part of His plan.

And yet, as they were traveling along the road to Capernaum one day and right after he told them for the second time that we would have to die, some of the disciples began bickering.

When they reached their destination, Jesus turned to them and asked what was going on. They must have felt a little ashamed because the Gospel says "At this they fell silent, for on the way they had been arguing about who was the most important."

After all that time, after all those lessons about humility, sacrifice, and service, the disciples still couldn't suppress their instinctive desires for power and prestige.

They knew that they were members of Jesus' inner circle, and they surely heard the murmurings among the crowds that Jesus might be the new king of Israel who would expel the hated Romans and restore the Israel's glory days.

So despite the fact that Jesus never talked about becoming an earthly, political king, the disciples couldn't stop their ambitious imaginations from running wild.

So when Jesus realized that the disciples were still full of pride and ambition, he called them all around and said, "If anyone wishes to rank first, he must remain the last of all and the servant of all."

This attitude of humble selflessness – this "dying to self," as St. Paul's letters portray it – isn't an easy thing to do. In modern times, one person in particular comes to mind who was able to do this on a consistent basis: Blessed Mother Teresa.

Mother Teresa was the embodiment of Jesus' call to be the servant of all. In complete humility, she denied her own ego and ambition, and devoted her life to helping the poorest of the poor.

The key to Mother Teresa was that she understood well what Jesus' disciples struggled to learn. She had "died to herself" in order to live for Christ.

Mother Teresa understood the message of this week's gospel reading. She

knew that she had to become the servant of all in order to rank first in the kingdom of God. She was able to do this because she perfected an important skill: the ability to see the face of Jesus in everyone she met.

Each of our readings today invites us to look deep within our hearts to root out our stubborn desires for power and prestige.

When we do that, we are able to become humble like the child in today's Gospel. And this can only be possible when we become a people deeply grateful for all of the gifts God gives us in our lives. When we follow the way of Jesus, the way of gratitude, sacrifice and service, we live in the perfection of justice and peace that we pray for.

Only then will we understand and live our lives as authentic disciples of Christ.