

October 20, 2024  
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Mark 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."

### **Background:**

Last week's Gospel ends with Jesus reassuring Peter and the disciples that "there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come." (Mark 10:30) Mark then describes Jesus addressing the disciples for a third time about the events that await him in Jerusalem. "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and hand him over to the Gentiles who will mock him, spit upon him, scourge him, and put him to death, but after three days he will rise." (Mark 10:33-34) This is Jesus' clearest statement yet of his impending passion, death and resurrection. The contrast between what Jesus foresees as his immediate future and what James and John seem to anticipate by their request draws more attention to Jesus' prediction.

Mark often portrays the disciples as facing the same issues that his community is facing. By placing the request of James and John here, Mark is demonstrating to his community the true nature of discipleship.

In the text, James and John ask Jesus for positions that would signify authority within the realm of power and glory, like the Romans that are their oppressors. The other disciples seem to be upset with what James and John have done. But the text does not say whether this is because they too were similarly hoping for positions of honor, or because they are embarrassed for them. James and John have requested what the others, themselves included, were hoping Jesus might bestow on them.

Jesus asks them if they are ready to accept both the baptism and the cup that he will drink. He is drawing on familiar experiences of gatherings. The patriarch of the family poured each person's cup. Those attending the meal were expected to accept without question whatever was given to them. The psalms also speak of a cup as one of inheritance or destiny. "The Lord is my portion and cup." (Psalm 16:5) Mark is reminding his community that they, too, have been baptized into the life of Christ, and they are receiving from the cup at their weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper. They, like the disciples, are Jesus' disciples, and their discipleship is not like that of their Roman oppressors. Jesus accepts the cup that has been poured out for him by his Father. They too must accept in faith what God prepared for each of them.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. When have you felt pleased or grateful for the person that you are?
2. Have there been times this week when you also felt discouraged by the person that you are?
3. Pope Francis has said that shepherds should smell like sheep. What is the benefit of smelling like sheep?

4. What are some of the feelings that arise within you when you hear this?
5. Read today's Gospel and think of Jesus still sitting among those same disciples as James and John approach him. What are some of the things Jesus thinks as he hears their request? What do you hear in his response?
6. Jesus asks James and John if they can drink the cup that he will drink. If Jesus asked that same question of you, what would you respond?
7. Can you talk to God about what you think God might desire for you, or some other awareness that arose when you read this Gospel?

The Gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to [fr.paul.gallagher.ofm@gmail.com](mailto:fr.paul.gallagher.ofm@gmail.com).

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscclalledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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### **Excerpts from the readings for October 20, 2024, the Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

The Lord was pleased to crush him in infirmity.

If he gives his life as an offering for sin, he shall see his descendants in a long life,  
and the will of the Lord shall be accomplished through him.

Because of his affliction he shall see the light in fullness of days;  
through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear.

Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Upright is the word of the Lord, and all his works are trustworthy.

He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the Lord the earth is full.

See, the eyes of the Lord are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness,  
To deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine.

Our soul waits for the Lord, who is our help and our shield.

May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us who have put our hope in you.

Brothers and sisters: Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens,  
Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable  
to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin.  
Let us confidently approach the throne to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

James and John came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."  
"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; 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, "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."

### **Excerpts from Isaiah 53:10-11; Psalm 33:4-5, 18-22; Hebrews 4:14-16; and Mark 10:35-45**

Friends,

Here are the Gospel background and reflection questions for October 20th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the opening part of the Gospel from Mark, Jesus responds to James and John who have asked him that in his glory one of them may sit at his right and one at his left. He tells them, "The cup that I drink, you will drink; 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." Jesus tells the disciples, "Whoever wishes to be great among you will be servant of all. The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The other readings have additional references to servanthood, and to this Servant giving his life as a ransom for many. In the first reading Isaiah prophesies, "If he gives his life as an offering for sin, the will of the Lord shall be accomplished through him. Through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear." Psalm 33 exclaims, "The eyes of the Lord are upon those who hope for his kindness, to deliver them from death and preserve them." In the second reading, from the letter to the Hebrews, we hear, "We have a great high priest, Jesus, who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses, who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help." At the end of today's Gospel, Jesus teaches that "Whoever wishes to be first among you will be the servant and slave of all." He also says, "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."

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!