

St Pius-St Anthony 25th Sunday Ordinary Time Year B2nd

We can't say he is not trying! Jesus is so patient! Of course, we know that, He is the Savior. But his patience is on full display today as he tries and tries to break through the distractions and incomprehension of the disciples. Watch and see how over the next several weeks Jesus is going to be giving discipleship lessons, and they may or may not be sticking with his students. Each of us needs to determine it ourselves, but it seems that the apostles need a lot of reminding of what it means to be a disciple, starting with exactly what type of Messiah Jesus is. Before I get into that too much, again, Jesus is really trying to get through to them what a novel messiah he is as a suffering servant messiah. There are two lines in today's gospel that bring this home, 1) Mk9:30 "began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it." Jesus is pulling them away from something & 2) Mk 9:33 after a stop "once inside the house" Jesus teaches them privately indoors, as He is drawing them even closer to Himself to get something across to them. What might it be? The kind of Savior He is; and that the world doesn't expect it from Him that way (His own don't expect obviously too). So Jesus is trying to create a dedicated space, a bubble with the apostles for them really hear and take in his words, much like any teacher today may expect/demand that all external devices (phones, tablets, watches, earbuds-who knows what else now) all be switched off to have the maximum focus of the students. Again, those lines in the gospel detailed them journeying away from Judea & Jerusalem (the 'thorough galilee' part) which was to avoid the silly controversies with the Pharisees, priest & scribes headquartered there that consumed Jesus' instruction time with apostles, and then the stepping away into the privacy of a home was to avoid even any crowd's manipulation of Jesus pressuring Him or them, pushing or pulling them in directions more according to their personal wishes than being about the Father's mission (Do this for us?) So, when Jesus has them alone he pops the question, asking them, "What were you all so energetically discussing/arguing about along the way here?" Keep this in mind: Jesus had just shared with them for the second time (in Mark 8, 9 & 10). Three times Jesus will try preparing them saying, 'I am a messiah that will be rejected, jailed, tortured and killed in Jerusalem—but then rise' After this second of three times he taught about his unique suffering servant leadership, as they walking along the way, (as if he has given them time to consider and study what he revealed), and they answer (Oh, wait, no they don't, they don't even say a word, because they are embarrassed, they are

busted, because their answer would be “Oh, we weren’t saying anything about your life-giving (saving words of eternal life teaching), we were just arguing about which one of us is the greatest! What a letdown! This scene is a little like, maybe a child does when a parent, mom or dad has been off on a trip maybe work or family business for a week or two and when arriving home and seeing the children for them first time, at the reunion scene- the child runs toward the parent and then stops before hugging or jumping on them and says, “You didn’t bring me anything?” Or remembering that Jesus is in ‘teacher mode’ here, makes me think of how many times teachers may be deep into the most interesting part of their lecture or demonstration- communicating what makes them get up in the morning, the crown jewels of their field, just about to bring it all together splendid insight, but wants to check in quick with the progress of the students and asks, “Are you with me, any questions thus far?” and a student says, “Are we about done with this-is it going to be on the test?” Okay, we need to step back and re-connect.

I am suggesting that the disciples were not arguing usefully about how best they evangelize the temple/synagogue attendees, or how to help Jesus’ message be given out among the village town folks, or how to economize the time left in ministry to increase healings/exorcisms along the path for next trip to Jerusalem.” No, none of these helpful/useful discussions focused on Jesus- What were they arguing about? Themselves. Who was alpha-top dog among them. It reminds me of our old kids game (emphasis ‘kids’) of ‘King of the Mountain’: when it would snow big, we kids would all run off to parking lots where they would push snow piled up into huge Mt. Everest’s of snow, and we would climb, scrape and claw to the top and then challenge each other-fight & wrestle to stay on top. (You were never there for long- often the struggle brought both fighters down the side). The apostles were fighting over which one of them was greatest- Can you imagine? Jesus just gave a personal tutorial on messiah leadership to them, and when He inquires about their after-class hallway discussion, He hears nothing about His teaching, only their selfish preoccupations boasting to each other about their self-importance. He has to think, “Oh, no, all wrong”. But how does he respond? Like a patient savior or patient mother, He sits down, calls them around, and using a visual display-He places a child in the center, as if saying, this powerless, good, quick to want to help (not saying they can but they want to) child is the greatest in the kingdom. Who is on top, who is in the center of it all- a little child! Jesus reminds them that God’s kingdom is built by servants-not bosses, that people are helped/saved through service of

others, and that the humble, curious and simple outlook of a child is what God desires among His people. Who is the greatest in the kingdom? The little child is the center of the Kingdom. The lowliest, and the least, they are the most important. The servant is the greatest. The helping and selfless server is who the whole kingdom hangs upon. The apostles didn't expect that, and it's probably not what we expected either. Jesus is telling us that the greatest member of his kingdom is the one most easily overlooked. The humblest, simplest one among us: Jesus says, they are the greatest. His kingdom is centered upon the servant; not playing boss, but simply helping.