

Twenty-Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time 'B - 2018
Wisdom 2.12, 17-20///James 3.16-4.3///Mark 9.30-37

→it is football season once again....and already the jockeying for position in the polls has begun

→whose team is number 1....who will make the playoffs....who will be the champion

→these are the questions that spur ratings on talk shows and fill stadiums with fans

→some of you say Ohio State...I say Notre Dame...some say the Steelers.....others say the Browns

→it's all about winning...coming out on top...being number 1 [PAUSE]

→the political race for president is still over two years away and but the mid-term elections are already impacting....what appears to be still a long way down the road

→[and] we all know the drill...this frantic clawing for position and prestige

→it is a well-worn plot that shows up in our school playgrounds, in our family relationships, in our offices and in our entertainment/sports interests

→because you see....it's all about winning...coming out on top...about being number 1

→we reward overachievers, aggressive competitors...all of whom will stop at nothing less than greatness and dominance....and why is that?

→[because] there is little affirmation in our world today for the one who aspires to the middle of the pack, the back of the line...the bottom rung of the ladder

→we are taught from early on...to value, to look up to....and to give our respect the leaders...the number 1's...the winners.....

→and today....we hear about a similar situation happening long ago in our gospel reading

→even the disciples of Jesus were no different than you and I because as we hear they were also concerned about “greatness.....about who was number 1.....who was the favorite...the first...best and brightest....

→and as we find out...Jesus had his own opinion and thoughts about “greatness” and today he teaches his disciples and he gives you and me a valuable lesson as well.

→for Jesus....greatness was rooted in who a person was...

---while for the disciples....greatness was rooted in what they had accomplished.

--and so, Jesus teaches a lesson today.....

PAUSE

→without a doubt Jesus was the greatest miracle worker the disciples and people had ever seen

→and whole purpose of any of the actions and miracles that Jesus performed was to try to show the people of his time what it meant to be a servant

→and yet today we find the disciples dreaming of a fantasy land....a kingdom

→...where J. would be the king.....and they would be his assistants

→arguing about who would be the greatest...who is #1,2,3 [much like our sports programs and many of the Monday morning quarterbacks will do after the games this weekend.

→the point being.....that Jesus is talking about service----while the disciples are arguing about status

→and so J. wraps his arms around a child///places child in front of them and identifies himself w/child.

→he says.... “welcome this child, and you welcome me”

---it is a dramatic statement that drives home how we should stand before God and one another

---Christ places the child before us as an invitation....small, innocent, and humble ---in the hope that we too will realize.....this is how we need to be in our lives

---and that, my friends, is the challenge before us from today's gospel

PAUSE

→and yet this challenge remains tough to face..... because these days more than ever we are bombarded with values and a society that equates "greatness" with greed

"greatness" with competitiveness

“greatness" with accomplishments rather than with service

→our society...today associates "greatness" with the exact opposite of what Christ is saying and trying to get across to his disciples and to you and me

think for just a moment, of all the people we hold up in society today and to our children as being "great"....

→if I was to ask you to name 5 people you consider "great"....I guarantee that at least 2 of them would be sports figures or celebrities

→and let me ask you this...those people on your list...are they there because of what they do or because of who they are.....

→more than likely it's because of what they do....they catch footballs for touchdowns, hit baseballs for home runs...shoot baskets to win games....rather than who they are....

is LeBron James considered "great" because of what he does on the basketball court or because of who he is as a person????

[→you and I have been conditioned to view "greatness" in terms of what people do...or what they have accomplished rather than because of who people are]

→in today's world...we have been programmed to realize, or to understand that "greatness" is achieved by

---competitiveness and aggressiveness

---excelling to be #1,

---to be the best and to have the best

-→to be different and above everyone else

→and yet the message of Christ is quite different...in fact it is just the opposite

→because we hear to be first, to be #1....means to be last,

...it means being a servant, being open-hearted and innocent...like a child

---being great...in the eyes of Christ is not accomplished by what we do....but more so by who we are

and putting **that** into practice these days.....is not an easy task

→it's not easy to balance our good honest ambition w/the words of Jesus.

--it is not easy to be generous when you know you are being taken advantage of

--in a world in where... "nice guys don't finish first

---or where...we need to look out for #1, and number 1 is me"

---or where...we need to always be on top

---the words of Christ are hard to swallow and equally hard to follow...PAUSE

and so perhaps we need to be reminded of the childlike wisdom Jesus presents to us today

that as we gather around the altar, we do so in the same way in which Christ puts his arms
around a small child

---and to remember that greatness lies in how we serve...how we take care of one another

---we all have a chance to be "great" ...in our own unique and special way

→but in the end...perhaps the real lesson we need to remember is that true greatness is not
rooted in what we accomplish or by what we do or in what we have

but instead...true greatness in the eyes of Christ is rooted in who we are, by how we
act, and by how we serve one another.