

St Pius & St Anthony 25th Sunday Ordinary Time Year B2

When I was a kid, holidays like Easter, Thanksgiving & Mothers' Day, meant our extended family of cousins, aunts & uncles all gathering, reunion-style, at our grandparents' house. And as kids how we longed to one day, be able to eat at the 'big-people's table'. Not that the kids' table wasn't fun, but still, it wasn't the 'big table'. We all thought, "Maybe next time, we will get to move up?"

Our gospel today, and the apostles in it, reminds me about what always happened at our kids' table especially at my maternal grandmother's house. Not only did we kids all eat at **another** table from the adults, but at their house, we also ate in **another room** – it was one of the spare bedrooms off the main room. This meant that too much noise coming from us would get us an adult visit – an aunt sticking her head into the room asking, "What are you all up to in here – what is so funny in here that everyone is laughing?" And we always responded, "Oh, nothing." She would shake her head and say, "I doubt it – but behave and keep it down". Yet, interestingly **not only too much noise**, but also **not enough noise** (if we were too quiet, that would get a supervisory visit too – "what are you all planning?" Which leads to maybe the sneakiest thing that ever happened that got us all in trouble – my cousin thought it would be cute to take the back off the chiming mantle clock and force it to strike bells regardless of the time. So, he made it chime for us, and if he did it only once we probably would have gotten away with everything fine. But, no, as we sat amazed that he could make the clock strike bells, of course, someone said "Do it again". So he did, and it raised the alert in my grandmother who also wore a watch and she entered the room to see what must be wrong with the clock. And his hand was caught in the back of the clock! But not just him, we all got in trouble and had to go 'sit on the couch' for half an hour (her version of standing in the corner). Of course, the rest of us protested, "But we didn't do anything". To which she responded, "Yes that's it, you didn't stop him. But consider your punishment due, for the times I haven't caught you about something else!"

But why do I share this story? Well, the apostles being called out by Jesus for their petty arguments about who is the greatest ('King of the Hill' Talk), made me think of how many times, mom may have asked us kids, "What are you all discussing?" and **we responded with silence like them!** Or if mom entered the room and we all hushed up, (going suddenly from animated to subdued), she knew we were up to something we shouldn't have been. She'd say "Whatever it is – whatever your plotting, don't do it.' In today's gospel, Jesus is walking along ahead of His apostles, seemingly not distracted by their active arguing, and when

they arrive back at home in Capernaum, He nonchalantly asks, “So, what had you all so worked up on the way here?” **And they are silent!** Like a mom interrupting a conversation between two children planning to sneak candy from the kitchen cannister, the apostles freeze up and embarrassedly go silent. Why? Well, Jesus had just been teaching what a unique type of messiah He was – a Servant Savior, willing to suffer for His subjects, and that He would even give his life for them (die for them). So, especially after hearing of such personally sacrificial leadership as His, how do the apostles respond? They start **selfishly** arguing about ‘Who is the top dog-who is the greatest’. Once more here in chapter nine of Mark, (and one more to go in about four weeks in reading Mark chapter 10-it will happen again!) Once again, Jesus reminds His disciples about the special kind of messiah He is, not like any other. He is willing to suffer (and die) to help His people. And once more, the disciples do not understand this new ‘suffering servant-hood’ of Jesus.

So the disciples all get called down too, for being so caught up in their boastful petty challenges to each other, bragging to exalt themselves, all the while putting others down. Jesus scolds them all by revealing that the greatest in His kingdom is the little one – the servant of all – the overlooked, the taken for granted person, such as this child. And Jesus offers a type of ‘show and tell’ demonstration and lifts up a kid in the center of them all seated there. This one, a simple child, is the greatest in God’s kingdom (last is first, least is greatest, servant is king!) If you want to be great in the kingdom, take the lowest position.

I mentioned earlier that the apostles are ‘slow on the uptake’ to accept and understand this teaching/example of God’s Will calling for sacrificial servant-leaders (again, last week Peter was called out 8:32-33, today all the apostles need correction from Jesus 9:34-5 and in four weeks in Mark 10:37-38 James and John will show out selfish ambition before being put in place again by Jesus). Yet, we must ask ourselves how eager we are to be last, least and ‘servant of all’? Likely, we all resist not ‘getting our way’ and we may be quick to push ourselves ahead of others, not considering Christ’s desire for us to ‘wait on them/serve their need before our own’. But Jesus calls us to do the opposite. Rather, He teaches us to ‘Deny our selves, take up our cross daily and follow Him’ (Mark 8:34) Of course, the apostles will come to understand and embrace this ‘servant’ discipleship of Jesus, especially after the gift of the Holy Spirit is given them after Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension. In fact, many of His first followers will be led with Him into martyrdom themselves.

(John’s gospel especially highlights this later understanding of the apostles after the fact, such as when John mentions in 2:22 following Jesus’ prediction of his death-Temple of His Body torn down and rebuilt. *“when he was raised from the dead, his*

disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe". And in John 12:16, it is spelled out that, "His disciples did not understand this at first, but when Jesus had been glorified they remembered that these things were written"-about Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem.-Jesus had even told the apostles, in John 14:26 "the holy Spirit that the Father will send..... he will remind you of all that I told you")

So, may we take to heart the call of Jesus to serve as He serves, and to be quick to lift others up by placing ourselves at their service in His Name! Jesus readily gives Himself to us (that Servant Messiah), and may we imitate His Way to eagerly care for the least and last among us as He would.