

25th Sunday of the Year B Cycle 9-20-15

(Special introduction for healing mass)

Well, in just a few days Pope Francis will be in the United States.

Everybody wants to see the pope.

Tickets to see the pope are hot items!

Try to get to see the pope, one on one, that's just about impossible!

While the likeliness of getting close to the pope very slim to near impossible, in today's gospel we hear that he disciples not only had d access, to Jesus, but daily access. They never had to make a special appointment to see him. He had chosen them to be his disciples, with the mission to carry on his healing and saving work after he was gone.

But his disciples were not exactly interested in the same mission Jesus had in mind for them.

They saw Jesus perform great miracles and cures. (the deaf and dumb man, the man with a withered hand, the raising of Jairus' daughter)

They heard his great preaching and confronting the scribes.

They saw the large crowds he could attract.

They were saying,

- **“Let me be your disciple.**
- **Let me help found a great earthly kingdom based on your teachings and your power.**
- **And, by the way, help me be the greatest among your disciples in that kingdom.”**

They were arguing about who was the greatest among them.

We may be quick to criticize the disciples for their view of life, but we need to look closely at their point of view. The desire of being the greatest in the kingdom can come upon us very subtly: For instance: Pictures of people who have seen the pope: selfies of family or rich vacations. You hardly ever find pictures of being with the sick person or a needy young person who comes to the door. They are not valuable enough to take a picture of.

Since the disciples (and remember, every time we hear “disciples” in scripture, it is referring also to US who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, washed away our sins and brought into the loving family of the Father in the Spirit) Jesus sits down with the disciples. When a rabbi is ready for a major teaching, he always sits down. He sits down and simply says, “The greatest among you is the one who is a servant.

All of a sudden the focus of the mission changes for the disciples. Jesus' message is not about how I can be the greatest, richest, most famous in his kingdom; the challenge is how to serve the most vulnerable in their midst. Then Jesus places a child before them. A child was not valued in the time of Jesus. They were considered property. Jesus calls us to value those who are least in our society.

As I prayed over the passage, I got to thinking; who is the most vulnerable, the ones of no value in our society? Here is the list I came up with:

- the very young and the very old;**
- the sick and weak;**
- the disabled and those under mental stress.**

They are the ones of little value in our world.

- We gather(ed) today (yesterday) to pay special attention to the ill in our midst because we who are disciples of Jesus, continue the ministry of healing the sick as Jesus did so often in his care for all.**

If we know that as disciples of the Lord we are called to be servants to the most vulnerable in our midst; Yet we shy away from our call.

Why do we shy away from caring for those most in need in our society? What keeps us away from carrying on the ministry of Jesus in our daily life? There are many reasons. One primary reason for our reluctance is best told in story form.

(Story of visiting hospitals when I was a young priest.)

- **Fear of the seriously sick.**
- **Fear of death.**
- **Fear of his suffering, and death. Fear of our own suffering and death.**

Jesus invites us more deeply into the mystery of life and death and resurrection. Jesus came to help us face our fears; to heal us; and ultimately help us pass from death to life.

Jesus is very consistent with his message that our calling as a disciple is to be a servant.

- **Washing his disciples' feet at the Last supper: As I have for you, so must you do to others. First have the experience of having your own feet washed; then wash others.**
- **Last Judgement scene in Matthew: Whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me.**

Pause

I have a recommendation for you this week: Take time to pray over this passage, Mark 8.

- **How would a young person who is searching for what he/she should do in life be reflect on this passage. Could it invite them to consider a career choice of service in the Church or world to help establish God's Kingdom?**
- **Engineer at Fiat-Chrysler**
- **Teenager at school; classmates who are bullied**
- **Family praying over the text; choosing action**

(mass of anointing)

I would like to end the homily with a word to the vulnerable among us: Thank you for being in our midst. Today you allow us the opportunity to touch Christ; you allow us to come close to the kingdom of God; you allow us to see the face of God. "For whenever you do this to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do it to me."

Remember: As we touch the vulnerable among us, we see God face to face.

