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Wednesday's Gospel: True Greatness

Gospel for Wednesday in the
8th Week of Ordinary Time, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Mk 10:32-45*)

“The disciples were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn

him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise.”

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” And they said to him, “We are able.” And 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 hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for

those for whom it has been prepared.”

And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Commentary

Today's Gospel passage presents us with one of the many dialogues between Jesus and his disciples as

they were going up to Jerusalem. On this occasion, just after our Lord had announced what awaited them in the Holy City, James and John approached him and boldly asked for a special privilege when his Kingdom was proclaimed: “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But the Master immediately responded: “You do not know what you are asking.”

For Jesus, the sons of Zebedee deserved this reproach not so much because they wanted to have a place of honor, but because they were trying to ignore what was about to take place in Jerusalem, where the Son of Man would be handed over to the Gentiles to be killed. In short, our Lord wants to correct their mistake of trying to obtain the victory of his Kingdom without going through the Cross.

The Cross is an essential part of human history, and Jesus wants to transmit this message to his disciples of all times. Our Lord is showing us his willingness to face those who “will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him.” But he also wants to teach us how we should face adversities and that, no matter what happens, it is always possible to serve and give one’s life for others.

If we are willing to follow Jesus’ teaching, we will find what James and John were seeking. True greatness is attained when, with God’s help, we are ready to serve others out of love and to persevere in this endeavor, even when we need to confront serious difficulties. We know that this is what Jesus has done, and we also know that he will never abandon us if we try to follow in his footsteps.

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