

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2024

[Wisdom 2:12,17-20; Psalm 53; James 3:16-4:3; Mark 9:30-37]

There is a story from during the war in the former Yugoslavia, of a reporter who witnessed a little girl who had been shot by a sniper. The reporter discarded his note pad and pen and stopped 'being a reporter' for a few minutes. He rushed to a man who had picked up the child, helped them into his car and set off for the hospital.

The man with the child said 'hurry my friend, my child is still alive', a few minutes later he said 'hurry my friend, my child is still breathing'. A little further on, he said, 'hurry my friend, my child is still warm' and finally he said 'Hurry. Oh God, my child is getting cold.'

When they reached the hospital, the little girl was dead. As the men cleaned themselves up, washing her blood from their hands and clothes, the man turned to the reporter and said 'this is a terrible task for me, I must go and tell her father that his child is dead. He will be heartbroken'.

The stunned reporter, still in shock from what he had witnessed and said, 'I thought she was your child.' The man looked back at him and said, 'no, but aren't they all our children?'

The obvious answer is that yes, they are all our children. They are also God's children, and they are all entrusted to all of humanity.¹ It doesn't matter whether these children are born in Basingstoke, Gaza, Jerusalem, Kiev, Moscow, or Kinshasa; they are all God's children and today Jesus tells us we are to welcome them in His name and by doing so, we welcome Jesus.

In the first reading from the Book of Wisdom we can see a description of Jesus' Passion; written centuries before it happened; as he was tortured and beaten before being crucified; Jesus still asked his Father to forgive the perpetrators.

In the second reading, St James is warning us that disputes come from jealousy and ambition, and wherever we find jealousy and ambition we will find disharmony and wicked things of every kind. His counter to disharmony is the wisdom that comes from God. Being close to God and living according to God's word means living in peace, being considerate, compassionate and serving our brothers and sisters. St James continues by encouraging us to pray, God always answers our prayers. However, as we know, sometimes the answer to our prayers is, no. *God will give us what we need*, the things we desire which are not good for us, will be denied.

In the Gospel we hear about the disciples not fully understanding what Jesus meant by His death and resurrection. They sort of understood that Jesus would be leaving them, as they started to try and plan who would take Jesus' place as their leader. This is when a row broke out. They were demonstrating the words from the letter from St James in the second reading about desires. They were manoeuvring their position, putting themselves forward to be number one, in charge of the others. But,

¹ Jim Wallis, *All God's Children*, taken from *A World of Stories for Preachers and Teachers*, by Fr William Bausch, [The Columba Press, Dublin, 1998] 306.

as in many of the ways of Jesus, he tells them that to truly lead they must be servants of all; they and we, need to put our needs to the bottom of our list and put the needs of others first. True service, *diakonia*, is where the word 'deacon' comes from. As a deacon, I am not to lord it over anyone. My role is to serve. Service of the altar, service of the Word and service of charity. My service at the altar is probably the most visible of the things I do as a deacon; attending Mass, serving the priest, proclaiming the Gospel, distributing Holy Communion. My service of the Word also involves proclaiming the Gospel, sometimes giving a Homily, [for me, writing these reflections for publication on the Parish websites or use in my Homily are also part of my service of the Word]. In the absence of a priest, service of the Word could also involve leading a Liturgy of the Word, however, this would be in exceptional circumstances.

My service of Charity involves praying daily the prayers of the Church for the needs of my parish and the world; it involves visiting the sick, supporting the foodbank, getting involved in other charitable works, supporting those in need taking Holy Communion to people in hospital, the housebound or in care homes. It also involves encouraging and supporting others to serve God; by putting **their** faith into action.

I'm not listing these things to put myself on a pedestal, because God knows there is so much more that I could do that I don't make the time to do. This is what *I have been called to do*, and **we all have a calling**; the bare minimum we need to do is love God and love our neighbour, maybe you are discerning what God is calling you to do at this time?

If we look at today's Gospel again and reflect on our own behaviours, do we ever jockey for position, trying to get the best seat, or put ourselves above others? Do we see others as beneath us? Perhaps, we have never challenged any feelings of superiority which have tempted us? Jesus is telling us that, if we want to be first, then we need to serve. You might be sitting there thinking I'm too busy working to give up my time to help, could you make a donation to a worthy cause? You might be thinking, I don't have any money to donate, could you give your time? You might be thinking, I'm too old or ill to help out, could you give your prayers? God has given every one of us life, all He asks of us is to give something back; we all have something to offer, because our God is a loving God.

As the saying goes, the only time we should ever look down upon someone is when we are giving them a hand up.

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

CCC 539, 565, 600-605, 713: Christ, obedient Servant of God

CCC 786: to serve is to reign

CCC 1547, 1551: priestly ministry as service

CCC 2538-2540: the sin of envy
CCC 2302-2306: safeguarding peace

Please keep in your prayers this week

- The sick and housebound, those who are dying and those who are grieving.
- Father Jean-Patrice that he makes a full recovery.
- The families completing the Baptism Preparation Programme this Sunday at St Bede's.
- Cassian and his family who will celebrate his Baptism at St Bede's this Sunday [22nd].
- The success of the forthcoming Christians Against Poverty [CAP] money coaching programme, in the pastoral area.²
- Those excluded from society
- The success of the forthcoming pilgrimage to Medjugorje which some parishioners are going on

Deacon Tony
21st September 2024

² [Money coaching sessions at St Bede's](#)