

## Weekend Readings & Reflections

### October 16-17, 2021 – Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Reflection:** *The sons of Zebedee hardly know what they're asking in today's Gospel. They are thinking in terms of how the Gentiles rule, of royal privileges and honors. But the road to Christ's kingdom is by way of His Cross. To share in His glory, we must be willing to drink the cup that He drinks. The cup is an Old Testament image for God's judgment. The wicked would be made to drink this cup in punishment for their sins (see [Psalm 75:9](#); [Jeremiah 25:15, 28](#); [Isaiah 51:17](#)). But Jesus has come to drink this cup on behalf of all humanity. He has come to be baptized—which means plunged or immersed—into the sufferings we all deserve for our sins (compare [Luke 12:50](#)). In this He will fulfill the task of Isaiah's suffering servant, whom we read about in today's First Reading. Like Isaiah's servant, the Son of Man will give His life as an offering for sin, as once Israel's priests offered sacrifices for the sins of the people (see [Leviticus 5:17-19](#)). Jesus is the heavenly high priest of all humanity, as we hear in today's Epistle. Israel's high priests offered the blood of goats and calves in the temple sanctuary. But Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary with His own blood (see [Hebrews 9:12](#)). And by bearing our guilt and offering His life to do the will of God, Jesus ransomed "the many"—paying the price to redeem humanity from spiritual slavery to sin and death. He has delivered us from death, as we rejoice in today's Psalm. We need to hold fast to our confession of faith, as today's Epistle exhorts us. We must look upon our trials and sufferings as our portion of the cup He promised to those who believe in Him (see [Colossians 1:24](#)). We must remember that we have been baptized into His passion and death (see [Romans 6:3](#)). In confidence, let us approach the altar today, the throne of grace, at which we drink the cup of His saving blood (see [Mark 14:23-24](#)).*

### OPENING PRAYER

**Leader:** Welcome to our study for the Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Let us begin in prayer:

**All:** O God, who resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble: grant us the virtue of true humility, where of Your Only-begotten son showed in Himself a pattern for your faithful; that we may never by our pride provoke your anger, but rather by our meekness receive the riches of Your grace. Amen.

**Leader:** *Humility, service, and suffering. All three come together beautifully as we seek to imitate Jesus Christ. We must be humble in order to serve and accept suffering. Service often requires some suffering on our part as we lay our lives down for those we are serving. At the heart of our service is the intense love of Christ that we want to kindle within us and share with others. In which area do you struggle the most - humility, service, or accepting suffering? Take some time to ask Jesus to give you the grace to grow in this area so that you can be a servant-leader, sharing his love with those you encounter. Reflect on this as we listen to Dr. Ben Akers unpack today's Scriptures.*

#### **Fasting: Sacrificing with Jesus for Others**

Before Jesus began his public ministry that would eventually lead to his Passion, Death, and Resurrection, he first went off by himself in the desert for forty days to pray and fast. Fasting takes self-denial, and we feel it. However, through our suffering, we are able to join Christ in his sufferings in a profound way. This creates a space and real awareness in us that we need Jesus. What could be a more humble and quiet way of serving others than to fast when nobody is watching?

(Play the video on FORMED.org - [Opening the Word – 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time \(Year B\)](#))

- When you have a problem, to whom do you first turn? Have you ever considered turning directly to Jesus, who has suffered just as we do?

**Leader:** *Serve fearlessly this week. If you feel called to be part of a ministry at Church, take the leap of faith and volunteer. Find a way each day to serve your family or a co-worker. Do not be afraid of the demands of service, for it is when we give ourselves fully in sacrifice that we are most closely united with Jesus's Passion.*

## FIRST READING ~ Isaiah 53:10-11 ~

The LORD was pleased to crush him in infirmity. If he gives his life as an offering for sin, he shall see his descendants in a long life, and the will of the LORD shall be accomplished through him. Because of his affliction he shall see the light in fullness of days; through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear.

*The Prophet Isaiah is with God's people in Exile in Babylon. He makes a prophecy of a great leader who will not be like any leader ever known: God will allow his life to be crushed which will 'ransom' and 'justify' (make right) all people. Verses like this in Isaiah form the '4 songs of the suffering servant'. Christians understand these texts as teaching us about Jesus' suffering.*

- *Have you experienced anyone willing to 'suffer' for you? Can you think of any story where someone restored friendship with another at great 'cost'? What happened? How does this help you make sense of Jesus' suffering for you?*

## SECOND READING ~ 2 Hebrews 4:14-16 ~

Brothers and sisters: Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.

*The Letter to the Hebrews continues to explain how Jesus' death and resurrection has replaced the Jewish High Priest in the Temple. Instead of 'walking through the curtain' which separated people in the Temple from the sacred place of the Holy of Holies - God's presence - Jesus' death allows him to pass into heaven. Instead of the High Priest sprinkling blood on the Mercy Seat inside the Holy of Holies to bring forgiveness, Jesus on the cross has become the throne of grace - the new revelation of God's Mercy.*

- *Where do you go to, look at, feel, the mercy and forgiveness of God? Consider praying this week with a crucifix or at church in front of the tabernacle - to find grace.*

• **GOSPEL** ~ Mark 10:35-45 ~

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." He replied, "What do you wish me to do for you?" They answered him, "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" They said to him, "We can." 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 or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared." When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John. Jesus summoned them and said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

*Jesus has just finished his third prediction of his suffering and death (Mk 10:32). The immediate request of James and John for positions of power reveal they do not understand what Jesus' death means. The indignation of the others reveals they were all secretly seeking power and glory. The Kingdom of God and the Messiah to make it happen is still thought of as a strong political and military figure, and a triumphant banquet and honors given when the victory is won. And like other rulers, power will then be exercised as authority over them. Such a mindset will breed continual violence.*

- *How do you view violence and war? Do you secretly wish leaders would use power over others? Do you think the way of non-violence works?*

*Drink the cup and baptism are phrases full of meaning. The Father of the house would fill the cup of each member of the home. It was descriptive of God the Father giving out the plan / lot which was assigned for each person. It symbolized God's will. Baptism was not so much a water baptism as an immersion into the will of God - often involving some struggle and pain. Jesus is sharing with his disciples, the cup (job) is to set people free from the grip of sin and bondage and satan. This is a task which will involve hardship and suffering.*

- *What does drink the cup and baptism mean for your life? Does it cost you anything?*

*Jesus teaches about leadership. He uses some colorful images. Servant / Slave - humble service at a meal rather than a position of glory and being waited on hand and foot. Ransom - in Jewish culture a person in debt or enslaved could be ransomed back. Like a special family object in a pawn shop that is to be recovered and returned to the family. In religious worship it was also understood as an atonement offering to bring forgiveness and a re-union with God.*

- *How do you understand and exercise leadership? Have you ever actively said NO to Power. Pride. Greed?*

## **MEDITATION**

Who doesn't want to be first, and to be esteemed and honored by others? We seem to have an unquenchable thirst for recognition and fame, power and authority to rule

our own lives as we please, as well as the lives of others. Should we be surprised to see the disciples of Jesus thirsting for power, position, and authority? James and John, the sons of Zebedee, urged their mother to strike a deal with Jesus, their Master and Messiah. They wanted the distinction of being first and most important in position, next to Jesus, of course!

When Jesus called the twelve apostles to be his inner circle of disciples who would teach and exercise spiritual authority on His behalf, He did the unthinkable! Jesus taught contrary to the world's understanding of power, authority, and position, by reversing the order of master and servant, lord and subject, first and last! Jesus wedded authority with love, position with sacrifice, and service with humility. Authority without love is over-bearing and slavish. Position without respect and concern for the subordinate is demeaning and rude. And service without generosity and sacrifice is cheap and unkind.

Those who wish to serve with the Lord Jesus and to exercise authority in God's kingdom must be prepared to sacrifice - not just some of their time, money, and resources - but their whole lives and all that they possess! Jesus used stark language to explain what kind of sacrifice he had in mind. His disciples must drink his cup if they expect to reign with him in his kingdom. The cup He had in mind was a bitter one involving crucifixion.

A disciple of Jesus must be ready to lay down his or her life - each and every day in the little and big sacrifices required - and even to the point of shedding one's blood if necessary for the sake of Christ and his Gospel. What makes such sacrifice a joy rather than a burden? It is love - the kind of "love which God has poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Romans 5:5). An early church father summed up Jesus' teaching with the expression: "to serve is to reign with Christ." We share in God's reign by laying down our lives in humble service and love for one another, just as Jesus did for our sake.

- *Are you ready to lay down your life and to serve others as Jesus has taught and modeled for us?*
- *What kind of cup does the Lord have in mind for you?*
- *When you encounter suffering or trials in your life, do you trust God?*
- *What can we do this week to live the truth of the Gospel more fully?*

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Leader:** In closing, let us pray ...

**ALL:** Lord Jesus, make me a servant of love for your kingdom, that I may seek to serve rather than be served. In flame my heart with love that I may give generously and serve joyfully for your sake. Amen.

**Leader:** (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

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