

TWENTY FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (9/19-20/2009)

Wisdom 2/12-20, Psalm 54, James 3/16-4/3, Mark 9/30-37

A couple of weeks ago, on August 23rd to be precise, there was a controversial reading from Ephesians 5/21-32. Remember?

Wives were told by the author of the letter to be subordinate to their husbands in all things.

The author of the letter was accepting the existing social system and family hierarchy which dictated that men ruled the roost in the family.

But the letter did not stop there; it offered a new template or model for how that marital love should be shown by both husbands and wives.

They were to love each other as Christ loves the Church, with that same self-giving love demonstrated by Jesus' during his ministry.

In today's Gospel, once again Jesus tells his followers about the trials he will face in Jerusalem.

They don't get it: "*They did not understand the saying and they were afraid to question him.*"

Perhaps they did get it, only to sink into silence because the message was too much for them to comprehend.

When Jesus sees them arguing, he knows they are not talking about his coming ordeal.

They are trying to figure out who among them is the greatest!

Talk about missing the point!

Jesus sits them down and once again instructs them about the Kingdom.

It's not about individual preeminence, it's about service to one another: "*If anyone wishes to be first of all, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.*"

I think that is precisely the message the author of Ephesians was trying to get across.

Apart from the cultural aspect of the equality of men and women (a point made positively in *Genesis 1/27* and *2/23*), the relationship between man and woman, husband and wife, is one of loving service to one another.

It is supposed to be suffused with the same love God has for His people, the church.

Jesus then asked a child to come to him and he pointed out that the disciples should receive one another just as they would this child.

In so doing, they would be receiving Jesus himself.

On occasion, Jesus' disciples had a difficult time with his teachings— and this is one of those occasions. His disciples, men and women, had been culturally imbued with the idea that someone always has to be subordinate in relationships, and someone has to be the "boss".

In all honesty, we think the same way most of the time.

We moderns talk about equality under God, but we are quick to abandon that idea when unforeseen things happen.

Jesus issues a wake-up call to his close followers and to all of us.

He will demonstrate what the Kingdom is truly about when the future he has laid out is fulfilled in Jerusalem.