

TWENTY NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (10/17-18/2009)

Isaiah 53/10-11, Psalm 33, Hebrews 4/14-16, Mark 10/35-45

Most of us have experienced difficult times in the past year or so.
The downturn in the economy has forced us to tighten our belts, big time.
What we once considered necessities, we now see as luxuries.
And some economic pundits foresee the recession extending out into the future with no end in view.
Bad news for all of us.

In the Gospel today, it is the aftermath of the giving of bad news.
Jesus had once again announced his intention to go up to Jerusalem and face the music that he knew
was awaiting him.
This bad news didn't sit well with his followers.
Some of them even went about their business as if Jesus had never said a word!

Take James and John, two of Jesus' closest friends.
Jesus is warning of disaster to come and they are jostling to know who will be the "alpha dog" in the
Kingdom once it is established!
When their private approach to Jesus becomes known by the other apostles, jealousy and envy rear their
ugly heads.

They all seem like children concerned about their own little worlds when the salvation of the universe
hangs in the balance!
It reminds me of the elderly couple in Florida who, when they heard of the Force Five hurricane
bearing down on them, refused to evacuate, but instead pulled the shades down so as not to see
what was about to happen.

Jesus calls upon all of us to hear his message clearly.
He knows what he is talking about.
In the reading from *Hebrews*, the author offers a telling insight: "*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.*"
That's who Jesus is – our high priest who knows our human condition completely because he has taken
it on in a realistic fashion.

Jesus lived his life for others.
In whatever way we can, we are invited by him to also live our lives for others.
Not overly concerned with our own circumstances (though we don't ignore them either), but fully aware
of the common good and how we are called to contribute.
The individualism we all practice so predictably is out of place in the Kingdom.
Jesus, even as he tries to bring them along, is warning James and John of the cost of discipleship.
It's steep, he tells them. He has the same message for us.
As the Liturgy's opening prayer puts it: "Almighty God, give us strength and joy in serving you as
followers of Christ." Amen, amen!