

ON THE WAY

Mark 9:30-32 *"Jesus and his disciples left from there and began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it. He was teaching his disciples and telling them, 'The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death he will rise.' But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to question him."*

This passage marks a milestone. Jesus has now left the north country where he was safe and is On the Way to Jerusalem which is awaiting him there. Despite all the signs Christ had provided and the privileged instruction he had given, the disciples were still not reconciled with his imminent Passion and Death on the Cross. They will only come to understand completely with the infusion of the Holy Spirit, at Pentecost. This teaching is blunt: although the Son of Man is guided by the hand of God, he will be killed by human hands. Those who set their minds by human things will do away with the one who sets his mind by the things of God. But this death will be transformed into Resurrection.

Although they hear Jesus' words, the disciples do not want to know what he is saying. They are naturally afraid for themselves. When they did not understand, they were afraid to ask any questions. Their thinking is set on human things. Their thoughts are on avoiding suffering and pursuing status. Nothing can move these concerns from the center of their consciousness.

Mk. 9: 33-37 *"They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, he began to ask them, 'What were you arguing about On the Way?' But they remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves On the Way who was the greatest. Then he sat down called the Twelve, and said to them 'If anyone wished to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.' Taking a child he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it he said to them 'Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me.' "*

CCC 473: But at the same time, this truly human knowledge of God's Son expressed the divine life of his person. The human nature of God's Son, *not by itself but by its union with the Word*, knew and showed forth in itself everything that pertains to God. Such is first of all the case with the intimate and immediate knowledge that the Son of God made man has of his Father. The Son in his human knowledge also showed the divine penetration he had into the secret thoughts of human hearts.

Nothing so well shows how far the disciples were from realizing the real meaning of Jesus' Messiahship as this does. Repeatedly he told them what awaited him in Jerusalem, and yet they were still thinking of his kingdom in earthly terms and of themselves as his chief ministers of state. There is something heartbreaking in the thought of Jesus going towards a cross and his disciples arguing about who would be greatest.

Yet in their heart of hearts, they knew they were caught. When he asked them what they had been arguing about, they had nothing to say. It was the silence of guilt. They had no defense. It is strange how a thing takes its proper place and acquires its true character when it is set in the eyes of Jesus. So long as they thought that Jesus was not listening and that Jesus had not seen, the argument about who should be greatest seemed fair enough. But when that argument had to be stated in the presence of Jesus, it was seen in all its prideful unworthiness.

While holding a small child, Christ gently offered a lesson to his disciples. Our Lord taught them, in order to be a Servant of all they would need the character qualities of humility, purity of intention, and service, not lofty honors and worldly power or status. The child here is an image not just of youth but of all who are weak and dependent on others.

CCC 1825: "Christ died out of love for us, while we were still *enemies*. The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our *enemies*, to make ourselves the neighbor of those farthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself ..."