

## **20240922. XXV Sunday in Ordinary Time. - Who is the greatest?**

The first thing that comes to mind when listening to today's Gospel is the great contrast between Jesus and the disciples. On the one hand, Jesus is preparing them to understand the suffering sacrifice he will be subjected to, while they are worried about who is the greatest among them.

Jesus realized that they had not understood the message, and he had to talk with them. If the disciples were to learn something from Jesus, they should not be concerned about who is the greatest of all but rather who can imitate him in his attitude of selfless service.

It is difficult to understand God's greatness when we want to see it with the naked eye. God is bigger than we can imagine. It is difficult to imagine God's kingdom when all we know is the world we live in. For us, God's greatness cannot be measured. It would be easier for us if we learned to find Him in the things and places we least expect. Our only hope is that our understanding of God will grow as we get to know Him.

In one of his books, Father Gregory Boyle tells the story of a young boy who was detained in a juvenile detention center near Los Angeles, California. Father Gregory was preparing to celebrate the first communion mass for a group of young men in custody. Rigo is a 15-year-old boy who is ready to make his first communion. The mass was to be celebrated at the jail's basketball court, and a group of volunteers had obtained a white shirt and a black tie for Rigo and some other boys.

About 15 minutes before Mass, Father Greg came over and sat next to Rigo to make some small talk and get to know a little bit more about him and his family. Father asked him about his dad... Oh! Rigo said, he's a heroin addict, and he's never really been in my life. He used to beat me up a lot. In fact, he's in prison right now, but he never really lived with us.

Suddenly, something came to his mind, and his face changed. A mental image changed his appearance... "I think I was like in fourth grade," Rigo began. "I got home. I got into some trouble at school, and they sent me home in the middle of the day. The truth is, I don't even remember why I was expelled. When I got home, my dad was there, he was almost never there, but that day, he was there. When he saw me, he said: "Why did they send you home?" And because he always hit me, I asked him, if I tell you, do you promise me that you won't hit me? He answered me, "I'm your dad. How do you think I'm going to hurt you?" so I told him..."

At that point, Rigo couldn't hold it in and started crying, rocking back and forth inconsolably. Father Greg took him in his arms, and when Rigo was finally able to speak again, he said, "My dad hit me... with a pipe... with a pipe..."

When Rigo recovered from his emotions, Father Greg asked him, "What about your mom?" Rigo pointed to a corner a few yards away from where they were sitting. A small woman was standing at the entrance to the basketball court. "That's her over there," Rigo said; "there is no one like her."

Once again, an image came to Rigo's mind. He paused emotionally and said: "I've been locked up for over a year and a half. She comes to see me every weekend. Do you know how many buses she takes every Sunday - just to come and see me? Suddenly, Rigo bursts into tears, sobs as loudly as before, and says: she takes... seven... seven buses! Imagine! Seven buses!

How can we imagine the big heart of this great God who takes seven buses just to be close to us? Sometimes, we look for God in things that are so big for us and that, for God, they mean nothing. We must learn to look for God in things that seem tiny but bring us closer to Him.

God's love is immeasurably greater than our imagination could conceive. God's longing to give us peace, security, and a sense of well-being only awaits our willingness to give our part, to open our hearts to understand the greatness of God's great love for us.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus does not want us, his disciples, to think that we should be less or insignificant. Rather, Jesus invites us to think less about ourselves. This attitude will help us to be more sensitive to the needs of others.

Jesus has been nothing but service to us. His service begins, of course, at creation. As the creed says, "Consubstantial with the Father; through Him all things were made. For us men, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven... and became man." The Son of God humbled himself to share his divinity with our humanity. He lived out his public ministry teaching, healing, casting out demons, accepting rejection and abuse as part of his service for our salvation.

His work of service continues to this day through his presence among us, especially his presence in the Eucharist, through which he gives us his body and blood to be our food for eternal life. Let us thank God for all he has done for us. In our prayers, let us ask that we may learn from his infinite mercy and his example of service to others.

In the Eucharist, Jesus gives us the strength to serve and bring the love of God to those who need it most; it doesn't matter if we have to take seven buses to get to them.

Wis 2:12, 17-20

Ps 54:3-4, 5, 6 and 8

Jas 3:16-4:3

Mk 9:30-37