

# Homily for the 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 20-21, 2018

Readings: Isaiah 53:10-11; Hebrews 4:14-16; Mark 10:35-45

Preacher: Sheryl Zabel

The author of Hebrews calls Jesus the “great high priest who has passed through the heavens.” Priests offered sacrifices, and Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice. He allowed himself to be killed in a painful and humiliating way. In Isaiah, he truly became the Suffering Servant: “...through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear.”

But James and John simply didn’t get it. They saw their glorified Lord as an emperor on a throne and themselves as his closest advisors, placed above all the other disciples. They had already heard Jesus speak of his coming suffering and death, but they could not have been paying attention. Or they only remembered the part about his resurrection, the happy part. Jesus went on to warn them that they would be “baptized” with the same baptism as he, but they still didn’t get it.

Then Jesus told the Twelve that his mission and theirs was not to imitate earthly rulers (or their top advisors). In Mark’s gospel, he says that their mission would be to serve, to “be the slave of all.”

It is the mission of every Christian. But way too often, we don’t get it. We certainly know that Jesus died for humankind and rose from the dead. These events are at the center of our faith. And, we do many good things—faith formation, transportation for those in need of it, hospital visits, rebuilding homes, preparing meals, and much more. Christians are simply nice people who go to church on Sundays, aren’t we? But is our only calling to be nice?

Sadly, we can also play God and decide who will be saved and who will not (the wrong kinds of Christians and all non-Christians, of course). Or—we can equate our faith with institutional rules. Rules are necessary in human organizations, but they are a means to an end, not the end itself.

If our lives are going well, we may not think that fidelity to Jesus and his mission could lead to suffering and death. And it may not. But what if we are told that

we must support an unjust war? What if we are confronted with violence against poor people? What if we hear that people are being deliberately starved? Can we stand by and do nothing, because it's too risky? If we are to be authentically Christian, we cannot.

This is what being the slave of all should mean. We are always called to serve. It's the calling that comes with our baptism. It's the calling that has lasted for 2000 years. So let us ask ourselves: how are each of us and all of us being called by God right now?