

Opening the Word: The final misunderstanding



You can't help but feel a bit of pathos for James and John.

By now, they have heard Jesus tell them that he has come into the world to die and rise again. That power is revealed in weakness. That they must become like little children.

They don't seem capable of understanding.

Heading toward Jerusalem, toward the very place where Our Lord will die, they ask Jesus for a favor.

[James and John](#) have entered a pact.

They want to sit on the left and right of Jesus in his glory. When he reigns from Jerusalem, they want to share in his power.

Oh dear, this reader thinks to himself.

[October 17 – Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time](#)

Is 53:10-11
Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20,
22
Heb 4:14-16
Mk 10:35-45

You don't get it. You don't get what he's saying. He told you the whole thing already.

Yes, he is the Messiah, the king. But his will be a kingship of suffering. Of death. Taking upon himself all the sin and darkness of the world. Loving into the darkness.

He will not respond with power and might but as the suffering servant of Isaiah. Through his suffering, the many will be justified.

The rest of the disciples overhear the negotiations of James and John. They're peeved.

The two rascals are trying to climb the corporate ladder. Through duplicity.

You can't help but feel a bit of pathos for the whole motley crew.

They don't get it. They don't understand Jesus when he tells them that if they are to reign, they must be a [servant to all](#).

Power is made manifest in gift, in love unto the end.

Now wait, a second, Our Lord says to us. I'm not just talking to James and John. I'm not just talking to the rest of the apostolic crew.

I'm talking to you.

I'm talking to the Church.

I'm talking to you, the bishops. Maybe, you have confused what it means to belong to me, to be my disciple.

Remember, my brothers, that power is given only to those who serve all. Who take upon yourself the sins of the world, loving those who are least lovable.

I called you not to pine for more important diocesan assignments where you'll have access to [power and the benefits](#) that come with fundraising. Long not for this.

I'm talking to you, my beloved priests, Our Lord says.

You were ordained not because you are better than the rest, more important than the People of God I called you to serve.

You were ordained so that you could offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, to give my Body and my Blood to men and women. Become what you have received in your ordination, become a living icon of me rather than a man interested in power for its own sake.

I'm talking to you, my beloved people. You were called as disciples for the sake of the salvation of the world. Stop creating imagined hierarchies among yourselves. All of you were convoked, called out of darkness, into the wondrous light of my love.

Jesus is [talking to all of us, dear friends](#).

Let's not have a pity pardon that we are among the condemned. Let's not back down from his hard words.

Instead, let us rejoice as we hear in Hebrews.

Let us rejoice that we have a great high priest, who knew our weakness. Knows our weakness. He has "sympathy" with us. He has pathos for us. With us.

Acknowledge our weakness, Our Lord tells us. Stop thinking you're complete. You're not.

And instead, rely on the sacrifice of the suffering servant that can heal us of the [sin of self-importance](#) that will plague the Church until the final judgment.

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