

Last week Jesus reminded the Apostles and us that He came as a suffering Savior and that we too must take up our cross and follow Him. Today there is another related teaching about what our Catholic witness should look like. The disciples were arguing on the road about who was the greatest among them so the Lord said: ***“If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”*** The Greek word used here for servant is “diakonos” the same word for an ordained deacon, Jesus came and calls us to be humble servants, not those seeking power over others to change them through domination.

We are called to greatness; Jesus doesn’t douse our zeal or energy, but He focuses on what is real and lasting. He illustrated His humble teaching using a child. While children today can wield tremendous emotional power over their parents and others, running the show more than they should, in times not too distant, children were to be seen and not heard.

We all know that we are meant to be child-like, not childish. One important aspect of being like a child for us in today’s reading is the vulnerability of the child and in a sense the weakness of a child. Children aren’t powerful in the worldly sense. They don’t have money, great learning, size, or strength. Children are little and change people’s hearts by innocence and gentleness, not force or power.

This is how God is with us, He makes Himself vulnerable and does not use His power over us to make us change but tries to win us over through His goodness and patience. The first reading from the book of Wisdom prophecy’s Jesus coming and suffering: ***“The wicked say: let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us...with revilement and torture let us put the just one to the test that we may have proof of his gentleness and try his patience.”*** Jesus, the Son of God was gentle, humble, and forgiving even in His passion and crucifixion... the servant is no greater than the Master. The Lord melts hearts by His meek endurance of evil, and so can we.

Our church building is filled with youthful saints who modeled this, one of which is St. Dominic Savio who lived in 19th century Italy and was made known to the world from a biography by his spiritual director, St. John Bosco. One day at school, when Dominic was about nine years old, two troublemakers in the class stuffed the heater with junk and debris and blamed Dominic when the teacher returned. Dominic was rebuked in front of the class, but the truth was found out the next day. When asked why he didn’t defend himself in the moment, Dominic said he knew the other boys would probably get expelled, but he would only be disciplined and he said that he was imitating Jesus, who remained silent when He was falsely accused. What a heroic example.

Right now, our world is in a tumultuous state and this country is seeing ongoing political unrest including another presidential assassination attempt. The best thing we can do is to remain prayerful and focused on how we personally can grow in our relationships with Christ and as a community of faith and love. There are already too many clashing gongs that do not change anything for the better. The battle line between good and evil is drawn across the human heart.

“Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members” (James 3:17).

Keep the faith,

Fr. Mike