

Twenty Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 17, 2021

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

First Reading: Isaiah 53:10-11

¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand; ¹¹ he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

R. (22) Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Upright is the word of the LORD, and all his works are trustworthy. He loves justice and right; of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him, upon those who hope for his kindness, To deliver them from death and preserve them in spite of famine.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Our soul waits for the LORD, who is our help and our shield. May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us who have put our hope in you.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Second Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need

Gospel: Mark 10:35-45

³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."

³⁶ And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" ³⁷ And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the

baptism with which I am baptized?" ³⁹ And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. ⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

The humanness of the disciples should bring us great consolation, while the magnanimity of Jesus should bring us great hope. The disciples were so human like us yet ended up so godly due to Christ's grace. In this week's Gospel reading we are reminded that the path of discipleship is a process of growth, and not a plateau of godliness that is once and for all achieved. Rather than getting discouraged when our sinful humanity is revealed we must remind ourselves that we are a work in progress, and that as we are brought closer to the Light, defects are more easily seen. So often, consciousness of our sin is an indication that we are drawing closer to Christ. The disciples had been with Jesus for some time, in the very presence of the Son of God, yet James and John's, selfish desire for grandeur and position had not been eliminated from their lives. Nor were the sinful response of pride and resentment by the other ten disciples. They too were in the process of growth and hadn't "arrived," even though they were Jesus' twelve handpicked disciples. Jesus' question to James and John shows his magnanimity as did his example of servanthood. "Can you drink this cup," Jesus asked. In their ignorance and perhaps arrogance they replied, "We are able." Rather than resent their ignorance and arrogance Jesus informs them that they would be included in his salvific process. Replying Jesus says, so to speak, when I am hanging there drinking the dregs of humanity's sins and redeeming all people with the fiery baptism of the cross, you will be there, represented by me. Jesus' great generosity and nobleness of spirit overlooked their foolishness and sin to include these still flawed disciples in his work of salvation. For followers of Christ who also remain so flawed and foolish, Jesus gives hope in this account of his dealings with James and John. For his grace is not extended only to the non-existent deserving and perfect of this world, but also, to all who are the flawed and foolish who choose to believe and trust in the cup of salvation that Jesus consumed on our behalf.

"Stumbling our way toward home, we worry to ourselves about the unworthiness of our love, only to discover that it has already been attended to. It was taken care of in that representative moment, that vicarious moment, in which he cried out, 'Father into your hands I commend my spirit,' and so saying he handed over to the Father all that he had assumed in the womb of Mary.

"...To fret about the quality of our love is to miss the point. Yes, we examine ourselves, confess our failing and pray for grace to offer the best. But it will never be good enough, unless with all its flaws it is handed over and taken up into his love for the Father." *This is the hope of salvation; that we who are so human can be received and accepted by God. Isaiah prophesied of this amazing love and this saving transaction where, in exchange for the suffering of Jesus we would be made righteous. What hope is present in this prophesy; "he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied"? Jesus satisfies God's demand of justice for us. "The righteous one, my servant, [shall] make many to be accounted righteous—and he shall bear their iniquities." What a glorious exchange. This is the hope of salvation upon which we must fasten our eyes and anchor our thoughts. For as we come to approach and love Jesus, the glorious Light of the World, our sins, and flaws will become even more apparent in his light. If we look inward for some reassuring hint of self-righteousness we will shrink back in fear. But if we focus on Jesus our high priest and the glorious exchange, he procured for us we will then be able to draw near to Christ's throne "with confidence," seeing only our Savior.

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INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

First Reading

1. How many aspects of salvation can you discover in this passage?
2. Which aspect of salvation is most meaningful to you?

Second Reading

3. How should an understanding of Jesus intercession for us, affect our lives?
4. What does the writer of Hebrews mean by “hold fast our confession”?

Gospel Reading

5. How would you respond if Jesus asked, “What do you want me to do for you?”
6. Why do you think the disciples were indignant? What was the root of their response?
7. How did Jesus demonstrate being servant and “slave of all”?
8. Redefine in light of Jesus’ discourse, what it means to “serve.”

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.