

Homily for 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday of year, b cycle October 17, 2021

Sometime after the Second World War, Pope Pius XI who reigned as Pontiff from 1939- 1958, received in audience a bishop, then a refugee, from one of the Eastern European countries under the thumb of State sponsored atheism. The people of his diocese were very often subjected to harsh measures imposed by the state. Many were subjected to torture, while others suffered martyrdom for the sake of the gospel. The bishop, himself, managed to escape and found refuge in a Western European country.

The Pope made it abundantly clear that he was displeased with the bishop. He had abandoned his flock and left them prey to the ravenous wolves. He refused the cup of suffering.

The Pope stripped him of his Episcopal authority.

No fewer than three times in Mark's gospel does Jesus speak openly about his impending Passion and death. In the tenth chapter of the gospel Jesus says that he is going up to Jerusalem in order to be crucified. The disciples James and John are clueless. It is as if they were deaf. They insist that they be given the best seats at the banquet table once Christ comes into his glory.

Christ was misunderstood even by his intimate friends to the very end.

The question posed by Jesus is addressed not only to the apostles but also to each one of us. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized (Mk. 10:38)?"

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus begged his Heavenly Father to take the cup away from him. Nevertheless, he submitted to the Divine will. Jesus will drink the chalice of the cross.

In biblical times it was the custom at a royal banquet for the king to hand his personal chalice to his guests. It was a symbolic gesture. The guests were invited to share the lot of their sovereign ruler. By sharing in the king's destiny, they each identified with him.

It is only on the cross that Christ comes into his glory. James and John requested that they be afforded the opportunity to sit in places of honor, one at the right and the other at left of Christ in his kingdom (Mk. 10:37). Recall that two thieves died along side Jesus, one at this right and the other at his left. Virtually all the apostles deserted him on the day of his crucifixion.

What did the two disciples want? Honors! The glory of recognition!

Asked by a journalist if he regretted not having been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, the English novelist and convert to the Catholic Church, Graham Green smiled and replied, "No, I have no regrets. I am awaiting the ultimate prize once I exit this life"

In the shadow of eternity, honors lose their luster and appeal.

My elderly father, now ninety two years old, was a fine golfer in his day and won many tournaments. For each of his victories he was handed a trophy. As he prepared to move from his longtime home on Whitehall road in Albany, he was asked if we, his children, should pack all of his trophies. He said, "No. Get rid of them all". His trophies were only collecting dust.

Do we ever ask Our Lord what he expects of us? Do we really want what God wants?

A disciple of Jesus must walk the way of the cross. He must accept in faith the baptism of death.

The apostles will eventually experience what it means to drink the cup (or chalice) of suffering. They will learn a most important lesson "No guts, no glory".