



Praying the Sunday Gospel
25th Sunday B
September 19, 2021
[Mark 9:30-37]

[Background on the Gospel](#)

Last week we heard the 1st of 3 “Passion Predictions” of Jesus; he is trying to prepare the disciples for his approaching death (and the promise of resurrection). At the 1st Passion Prediction in Mark, the disciples – especially Peter – strongly resisted his message and refused to accept it as a genuine and undeniable reality. This time, with the 2nd passion prediction Mark notes simply they did not understand and were afraid to ask. Throughout Mark’s gospel, the disciples never grasp that Jesus must die. They do not understand his divine vocation: to be “handed over” (by the Father who allows it and by human agents who carry out the “plan” of God).

Jesus then questions them as they enter the house in Capernaum regarding their discussion on the road. In shame, they fall silent for they had been discussing who was the greatest among them. Jesus takes the occasion to make it a “teaching moment”: the first and greatest must be the last of all and servant of all. He brings forward a child and embracing the child he explains that the child represents Christ Himself just as Christ represents the Father. Receiving the child, we receive Christ and the Father. The lowly one is at the center of Jesus’ community.

[Points of Reflection and Prayer](#)

1. Jesus speaks humbly and openly about his future. He is very aware of his impending death. He wants the disciples to understand but they resist; they are in denial. They do not understand such vulnerability. Perhaps we have a similar frustration with God’s ways in our own lives. We would rather avoid suffering. We like control. We expect God to protect us from pain of any kind. We do not want a vulnerable God who lets people or nature run their course; he rarely intervenes to work miracles or change things. Pray about this theme of a vulnerable God. Contemplate Jesus on the cross or in his agony in the garden. Jesus was fully human and therefore fully vulnerable.

2. The Passion Prediction of Jesus speaks about being “handed over”: in some way God the Father is part of the whole process for He allows Jesus to be handed over. This is an important point theologically: the Lord Jesus, Son of the Father is accepting wholeheartedly all that the Father asks of him. The Father and Son are mutually obedient in the process of the Son’s suffering, death and Resurrection. This whole process is ultimately the supreme manifestation of their perfect love for each other. Jesus does not fear death because it is the perfect and supreme way for him to demonstrate his self-less love for the Father and for us. It is also the means for him to assure us that we too need not fear death (in any of the many ways we experience it). Contemplate the confident total self-giving of Jesus in the process of dying and his 33 years of preparing for the ultimate and final moment of death. Pray for the grace to accept your own death and that of other loved ones.
3. In his human nature, Jesus must have been disappointed with the disciples’ failure to even ask him for a fuller explanation re: his need to die. And then to have heard them arguing about greatness!! Consider your own resistance to listening to the Lord, your own attraction to titles and power and recognition and the temptation to compare yourself with others. Pray to let go and be pure of heart. Let Jesus look at you with gentle sorrow but understanding. Allow him to reassure you about those aspects of yourself that are truly unique and the reason(s) he created and saved you. Pray for those in positions of power to learn humility.
4. The child: in Jesus’ day, they had no power, status or rights; they were totally dependent. There is a child in each of us – still and always. Let Jesus embrace the child in you. Look for the child hidden in others around you.