

Ordinary Time 29 - B - 1a

Is 53:10-11; Heb 4:14-16; Mk 10:35-45 (42-45, Short)

Mass Reflection:

Last week we mentioned participation at the Mass. One of the ways to do this is to focus on the words of the prayers of the Mass that are being said by the ordained priest. When the priest is speaking to God aloud with hands extended, he is praying on behalf of the whole community present - we all should be focusing on these words, making them our own, praying along in our hearts. We all share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and although the ordained priest is praying aloud in the name of the community and of the Church, we all are joined to that action. When the priest says "let us pray" it means ... "let us pray" - US not ME.

The ordained priest sometimes prays as representative of the people present (as in the opening prayer, the prayer over the gifts, and the prayer after communion), sometimes in the name of the whole church (as in parts of the Eucharistic Prayer), sometimes privately to God (these are generally silent prayers the priest says or personal references in the homily), and also the priest lends his voice to Jesus as Jesus - through him - speaks the words of consecration. Pay attention to when he is saying "us" and "we," when he is saying "me" or "I" (again generally silent prayers), and when he is saying "your Church."

Jesus is our one priest who becomes present in all the believers who form his Body worshipping the Father. See if you can note the various times the ordained priest is acting as a person worshipping God with his brothers and sisters, when he acting as a representative of the community offering prayers, and when Jesus uses the priest's voice or appearance to become more fully and powerfully present to us.

Homily:

Power and authority are things that many people crave, and we know that grabs and displays of power are as old as recorded history, but where did it begin in the Church? Apparently while Jesus was still preaching during his public ministry. In a rather bold move, James and John (in some versions with their mom as their lobbyist), make a play for the top spots in the kingdom. Their attempt to get these positions shows that they do not understand what Christian leadership is all about. This prompts Jesus to sit the Apostles down and give them a little heart-to-heart on leadership. Jesus tells them that they can't "lord" their power over others and "make their authority felt," but rather, those that want to be in charge have to serve others. As we see, he gives a great example of this in his own suffering and death - he tells them: *For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.* In essence Jesus is saying: "Hey, even me, the guy who will be given power over the whole universe has come to be a servant and sacrifice himself ... what about you?" He

challenges us to follow his example when we exercise our authority. Someone has to be in charge, but you don't have to grind people under your heels to do it. The more we exercise our authority in love, and respect and follow legitimate authority - especially the authority of God - we find peace. It is the trying to always be the one in charge, or trying to let people know you are the one in charge by abusing that authority that makes for a lack of peace.

Jesus picks up this theme during the Last Supper. He takes off his robe and puts on a towel and preforms the duties of a slave as he washes the disciples feet. He tells them: *I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done for you.* Jesus acting in this servant role did not diminish his authority, and his exercising his authority within the Church did not stop him from being able to be a servant. But can we who try to cement our authority by displays of power do this too? Trusting in God's power and the reality of God's ultimate leadership over all things, we can exercise loving authority where it has been given to us. In this way we can follow Jesus' example of leadership.

Jesus showed us that the style of leadership he exercised can be really effective. He might not have been a conventional ruler (having lots of money and fancy stuff, or a team of people who would hurt anyone who opposed him) - but he accomplished more than any ruler or leader ever has in the history of the world. Even his sacrifice on the cross may look to some to be a colossal failure of upper management, but what is important is what happened in the end. As we heard in the first reading: *If he gives his life as an offering for sin ... the will of the Lord shall be accomplished through him.* As long as the will of the Lord is accomplished, as long as we are able to approach Jesus in the Eucharist and draw power from the living God, as long as sin and death have been crushed and heaven open to us - then his leadership was a success.

Leadership can be exercised with humility and love and still be effective - being humble, loving and with a mentality to serve does not mean that one has to be a pushover - it's just that you don't have to use your authority to let people feel that your higher than them or to get yourself pats on the back at others' expense. The important things is that in the end the goals are accomplished. This example of leadership can be very effective, and our example can draw others to join us at the table of the Lord so that they can experience what Jesus gained through his exercise of his servant-leadership.