

## Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson

### **Sunday 17th October 2021 - 29th Sunday in ordinary time**

Readings (Year B): 1st: Isaiah 53:10-11 Psalm: 32. 2nd: Hebrews 4:14-16.

Gospel: Mark 10.35-45.

T.S. Eliot once said, 'Most of the trouble in the world is caused by people wanting to be important.' This observation could undoubtedly be applied to James and John. Their thirst for ambition stirred up resentment and indignation among the disciples. Quite what was going on in their hearts is hard to figure out, it was not a particularly edifying kind of ambition.

Not all ambition is wrong. Parents are proud of their children; we can be proud of our work; we may be proud to be associated with teams, events or organisation. Such pride is human and understandable. Is it the same with ambition? We all know pride comes before a fall. 'Brutus says he was ambitious,' speaking as he'd stabbed Caesar.

James and John, sons of Zebedee & Salome, both two of the three privileged disciples of Jesus who witness the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, the raising of Jairus' daughter, the transfiguration of Jesus, and the agony in the garden. Two men, brothers in cahoots together scheming to get special treatment. The kind of set up familiar in films, the news, politics, even in daily life. Human nature, being what it is, wanting a better deal. Just like a patient, listening parent, Jesus asks 'what is it you want me to do for you?'

As we know from a few Sundays ago, when all the disciples were arguing about who was the greatest, the brothers had not learnt what sort of kingdom Jesus was bringing; no real idea what following Jesus would mean for them, and indeed everyone. The way into the kingdom for Jesus will be suffering and death (he alludes to this as the 'cup' he later prays to be saved from in Gethsemane, and as the baptism he must be baptised with.)

These are not sacramental allusions, but hear the words as the audience of Jesus would have understood them. Drinking the cup was a metaphorical way to describe accepting the will of God, whether bitter or sweet. Baptism

meant being bathed in the seas of God's will which sometimes permitted calamity and suffering contrary to one's own wishes.

The only favour Jesus would promise James and John was the privilege of sharing his cross. Perks must be left to the Father. Glory after suffering. Jesus spells out the right attitude for all of them and all his followers:

The only supremacy is that he has given himself entirely for the loving service of all humanity. Take heart: they had to learn: we constantly are on that learning curve. Learn they did.

James the first apostle to be martyred, now James the Great, Compostella:  
John given the care of Jesus' mother Mary.

'May your love be upon us O Lord, as we place all our hope in you.'

Canon Philip Dyson

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