

True Leadership is Service

Today's Gospel could be described as a drama in several scenes. It forces us to ask ourselves about our vision of "true greatness" and "authentic discipleship." Jesus has just told his disciples that he is going to Jerusalem where he will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes and be put to death. The disciples seem to be totally oblivious; they are more interested in securing positions of honor and glory.

James and John (Zebedee's sons) approach Jesus, asking for positions of privilege, seeking to be at Jesus' right and left sides when he is enthroned in glory. Jesus inquires if they know what they are seeking and if they understand the "price" they must pay. They boldly assert that they are willing to drink the cup of suffering that Jesus himself will drink. Jesus tells them that they will certainly share in his sufferings, but this does not assure them of their desired positions of special glory and honor.

Note that the other ten disciples become angry with James and John; they most probably wanted such "positions of honor" for themselves. Then, in the next scene we see Jesus calling them all together and instructing them on the meaning of "true discipleship." We should note the "earthly ambitions" of *all the disciples* (the two as well as the other ten). Observe how Jesus is trying to teach the disciples what "true greatness" consists of; it is to imitate Jesus who came "to give his life as a ransom for many." Indeed, "authentic discipleship" demands sacrifice, suffering, service, and self-surrender (all in imitation of Jesus' example), who came "not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many." We ask ourselves: How can I respond to Jesus' challenging vision of discipleship in my daily life?