

CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

September 20, 2009

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle B)



Gospel reading

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark 9:30-37 *[To be read aloud]*

Jesus and his disciples left from there and began a journey through Galilee, but he did not wish anyone to know about it. He was teaching his disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise." But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to question him. They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house, he began to ask them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they remained silent. They had been discussing among themselves on the way who was the greatest. Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all." Taking a child, he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it, he said to them, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me."

Brief commentary:

Mark probably intended this story and the sayings that follow as commentary on the disciples' lack of understanding. This is the second time in the Gospel that Jesus predicts his upcoming suffering, and, as it happened before and will happen again a third time, the disciples "do not get the point." Ignoring what Jesus had just confided to them, the Twelve continued trying to figure out who was the greatest among them. Jesus used a child as a symbol of simplicity. In the culture of the time, children and women were considered less important than men. Jesus' words taught a hard lesson to those who were expressing ambition and pride. The role of the disciples in Jesus' work is one of service, especially to the poor and lowly.

Today's reading offers three significant messages:

- Jesus tried to explain to his disciples the real meaning of his Messianic identity.
- Children were the symbol Jesus used for the *anawim*, the poor in spirit, the lowly in the Christian community.
- The disciples were unable or unwilling to hear Jesus' message and continued to fight for power and status.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

1. Do I tend to look for status and control over others in my family, parish community, workplace, etc.?
2. Do I look at Jesus as a source of material prosperity, good health and long life? How do I look at suffering for the sake of the gospel? Explain.

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 587-594; 601-617; 1825.