

## Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Oct 18th 2015

“Can you drink the cup that I drink?”

....The cup I offer

In today's reading James and John ask Jesus, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” Jesus: “What do you wish me to do for you?” Expecting Jesus to comply, “Grant ... in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left.” Hear the innocent, naïve eagerness in their voices. They beat their brother apostles to the punch. They asked first! Possibly they thought, this is an easy request. Someone has to sit there, why not us?

Recently, I attended a concert – good musicians, not great. The guitarist was a family friend. Dave is tall, handsome, has a smile and personality that light up any gathering. Many in the audience softly sang every word of every song. A man in the audience approached me, asked if Dave was really as pleasant as he appeared. “He is always smiling and seems so sincere, is he?” “Yes”. I invited the man to meet Dave. The stranger couldn't believe his good fortune.

When have I been so attracted to someone that I felt I would give almost anything for the opportunity to meet that person?

Is this what we are hearing in today's gospel from James and John? Two men who walked miles with Jesus; slept next to him at the end of a long, hard day; fished with him; laughed, maybe even cried with him. Brothers who listened to Jesus' daily exhortations to love and care for others, especially the poor and outcast. Brothers who broke bread and shared limited resources with Jesus and others. Two who witnessed Jesus curing the sick and lame; healing the broken hearted, the lost and the yearning. Often they understood little of what was happening. They knew only that they wanted always to be as close to Jesus as possible. Jesus who gently and sincerely loved everyone he encountered: sick, homeless, hungry – even the politicians of the day.

Jesus asks them, “Can you drink the cup that I drink?” Hummm...What exactly does this mean for me? I see myself joyfully, enthusiastically reaching out to touch the Pope's hand, his garment. I hear Pope Francis' bold, challenging yet gentle words, but am I really listening? I watch to see how others, the ones he is really speaking to, respond. Will his words change the way they do things? The way we do things? The way I do things? Have I been listening to the gospel words of Jesus for the past 60 years? Have I?

Today Pope Francis is speaking Jesus' words of compassion for the poor, personal generosity of time and resources, concern and care for the homeless, the poor and for our planet, our natural resources – nothing new, nothing the gospels don't proclaim. Jesus spoke this message on the plain, from the mountaintop, in the garden, at a table, and in the midst of political crowds. The Pope continues to speak Jesus' message- in a plane, on a bus, from a balcony, in a prison, while eating with the homeless, in the public forum, from an improvised altar.

The message is the same.

We are a beloved people to whom Jesus offers love. A love we are meant to share and spread. "...we are equal in prayer..." How do I receive this gift of love which Jesus offers to me? How do I receive the challenging, yet gentle words offered by Pope Francis? Am I sharing the bread I bake, the little I may have? Am I generous with my financial and personal resources of time and talent, what little I may have? Do I invite the hungry child to my table? Do I see my homeless brother? Do I listen to my sister's story? The Pope's encouragement gives me hope and inspiration that I can do something, no matter how slight. What I could do is.... What I would really like and enjoy doing with and for my brother and sister is..... I want to offer.... Just entering into the conversation, I realize how much I do have to share. I am bountifully blessed – what little I may have. I have hope.

Today's goodnews: My attraction to Pope Francis is but a spark of Jesus' attraction to me. His cup is continually being poured out and offered to me in untold ways - sometimes bold and challenging, sometimes gentle and inspirational. Jesus holds the cup while I sip. The words of Jesus' song are being softly sung throughout the land. Listen!

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