

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jul 25th 2017

Feast of Saint James, Apostle

Today the Church celebrates the memory of St. James the Apostle (sometimes called the “Greater”). James and his brother John left their father Zebedee in the fishing boat when Jesus called them to follow him. James may have felt pretty proud of himself for being in Jesus’ close circle of friends (he was present at Jesus’ Transfiguration and at the agony in Gethsemani). Yet the experience narrated in today’s Gospel may have come as a shock to these “sons of thunder.” Their mother requests Jesus to reserve seats of honor, at his right and at his left, in his Kingdom. Instead, Jesus teaches them about leadership and humble service. There are leaders who lord it over others and who can be authoritarian. The follower of Jesus, however, ought to follow the example of the Guru who came “not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” The Guru tied a towel around his waist and washed the feet of his disciples.

After three wonderful years at Creighton University, I returned to India last month and was missioned to a Jesuit school in Belagavi, South India. It is a lovely Catholic school and I enjoy working there. Today’s readings are a timely reminder me to be humble in service. I catch myself when there is a temptation to “lord it over others.” When I become aware of my own finiteness, weaknesses, and mistakes, I realize that I am like those simple clay jars that Paul speaks of in the first reading. Yet Paul tells us that we hold that awesome Treasure within us, “so that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us.” The infinite power of God consoles, supports, and strengthens us to face the challenges of life. Christ, alive in each one of us, transforms us and fills us with his Spirit to become joyful and courageous people.

Let us pray: Dear Lord, as we hold this Treasure in earthen vessels, help us to delight in your presence within us and share your joy with those we meet today.

Take care.

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