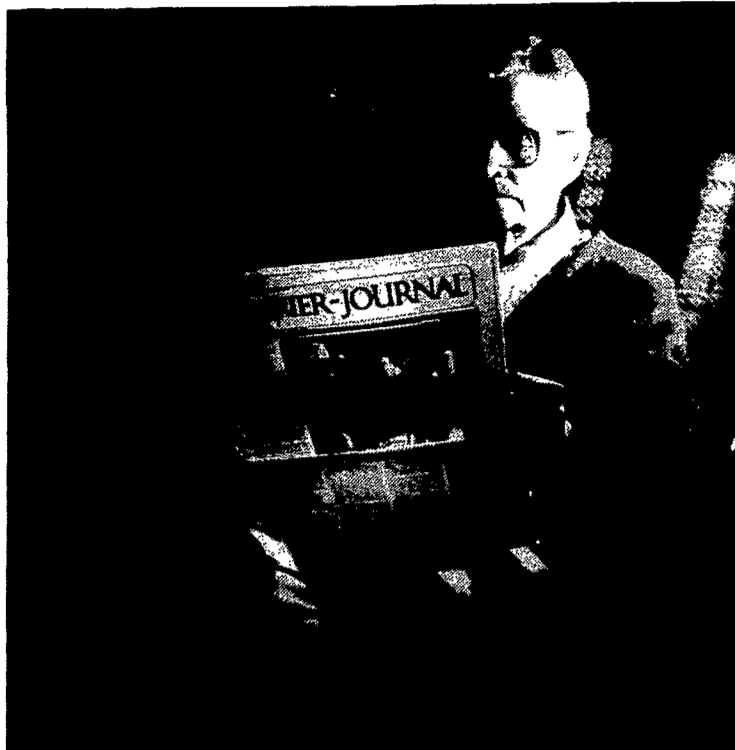


Columnists

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Leadership through service to all

By Father Albert Shamon

Sunday's readings: (R3) Mark 10:35-45; (R1) Isaiah 53:10-11; (R2) Hebrews 4:14-16.

Sunday's Gospel has two messages. One is that those who are leaders in the Church must exercise their leadership by service (diakonia).

The exercise of authority in the Church must never emulate that of the rulers of this world. Lording it over others has no place in the Church. Jockeying for positions of power, as James and John did, is unacceptable. Rather those who would be first must serve the needs of all. This revolutionary principle of Church authority is based on the example of Jesus Himself, who came, not to be served, but to serve — to give his life in ransom for the many. He is the suffering servant of Isaiah "who gives his life as an offering for sin" (R1).

Francis Joseph was emperor of Austria and king of Hungary from 1848 to 1916, one of the longest reigns in history. When an epidemic of cholera overran Europe early in his reign, Francis was advised to leave Vienna and take refuge in Salzburg until the plague was over.

"Will there be room enough in Salzburg for all my children?" asked the emperor. "Certainly, your majesty," replied his counselors, "there is plenty of room for all the royal family."

"Is there really room for all my children?" the monarch repeated as he pointed from his palace window to the crowds below. "Look at all those people. They are my children. Should their father forsake them in danger? No, my beloved Viennese have always shared my joys and sorrows. I will not abandon them in their hour of trouble." In the Church, likewise, those in authority must be the servants of their people, as was Francis Joseph.

The other message in Sunday's Gospel is that if anyone wishes to share in the glory of Jesus, he must first share in His sufferings: no cross, no crown; no pain, no palm; no thorns, no throne; no gall, no glory.

Mark's portrayal of the apostles is anything but flattering. They consistently misunderstood our Lord. They failed to understand that he must die. Even more, they failed to understand that one who would be truly His disciple must first drink the cup of suffering and be immersed in the waters of pain and death.

In Matthew, we read of Salome, the mother of James and John, asking for places of honor for her sons. Matthew felt the request was

A Word for Sunday

unworthy of an apostle, so he attributed it to the mother. Mark, however, was more honest. He told things just as they were. And that is good. When Ivanka asked Our Lady at Medjugorje if her mother was in heaven, Our Lady said she was. When Ivanka told the other women in the village about this, they said, "Thank God, there's hope for us."

Likewise, it is good that Mark shows us the apostles as they once were. They were not saints in the beginning. They were at first just ordinary persons, who for years completely misunderstood Jesus and who had ambitions like the rest of us. Yet it was with people like these that Jesus set out to change the world — and He did it!

James and John felt they were in on a good thing and were determined to make the most of it. They asked to be prime ministers in our Lord's kingdom. Maybe they felt they had a right to this, because a couple of times the Lord had made them part of His inner circle. Or perhaps they felt they were a bit better than the others. Their father, Zebedee, was able to employ hired help, and there was a bit of the snob in them.

Then, they were still unable to get it through their heads that the Messiah was to be the suffering servant of Isaiah, even though our Lord had told them three times of His passion, death, and resurrection. They could only think of an Easter without Good Friday.

However, to the everlasting glory of James and John, no matter how unclear things were to them about the cross, they still clung to Jesus — they continued to believe in Him. And after the cross, they finally did learn, they drank the cup and were baptized by martyrdom.

And so it is with us: to serve is to reign, and to follow Christ is to carry the cross daily. We may at first not understand, but if we cling to the Lord, one day we shall.

Who do you say that I am?

By Cindy Bassett

One day Jesus called his 12 apostles, and together they went to a solitary place far from the crowds that followed them everywhere.

"Did you see those Roman soldiers in the crowd today?" Peter asked. "I heard some people saying that they were sent by Herod to investigate Jesus?"

"No doubt even Herod has heard of all the good work that you do, Master," John commented.

"It's not just that," Simon the Zealot said, chuckling. "Since Herod had John the Baptist put to death, he is plagued by nightmares. He believes that Jesus may be John the Baptist come back to life!"

"Well then justice has been served," James said. "John was executed on a whim of Herod's wife!"

"Perhaps we have started a revolution after all!" Simon said.

Jesus listened to all that his apostles said, but he said nothing. Finally, when they were silent, he asked them all: "Who do the crowds say that I am?"

"Many people agree with Herod and think that you are John the Baptist or one of the great prophets like Elijah raised from the dead," John replied.

"A miracle worker," Matthew said, "but someone much greater than a magician who only uses trickery!"

"But make no mistake about it," James added, "not everyone who comes to see Jesus believes in the new kingdom. Many view Jesus as some sort of curiosity!"

"The Jewish elders and teachers of the new law regard Jesus with suspicion," Judas said. "They are certain Jesus is trying to destroy the laws."

"That is why the Pharisees are always trying to test you, Master, with their endless questions," James said.

After everyone but Peter had expressed a

The Bible Corner

viewpoint, Jesus turned to him and asked: "What about you, Peter? Who do you say that I am?"

"You are the Messiah, the Christ," Peter answered without hesitation.

"It is my Father in heaven who has revealed this to you," Jesus replied. "You must not tell this to anyone. There is much that you do not understand yet. I must suffer many things and be rejected by the chief priests. The Son of Man will be put to death and, on the third day, He will be brought back to life!"

The apostles looked troubled after Jesus said these things. So Jesus asked them: "Knowing this, do you still want to be my followers?"

"Of course, Lord, where would we go without you?" Peter said. And the others nodded in agreement.

"If anyone wants to be my follower, he must deny his own self. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me will save it. For my Father does not measure a person's life as the world does. What good is it if someone masters the entire world and achieves great wealth and prestige, but in the process loses his own soul?"

"There is no success in life without you, Lord," Peter said.

"If you choose to follow me," Jesus continued, "then someday you will be gathered together in the kingdom of my Father, where you will live with me forever."

Scripture reference: Luke 9:7-9, 18-27.

Meditation: "Who do you say that I am?"

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