

# The Living Word

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

19 September 2021

## Reflection by Greg Sunter

Last week's gospel, in which Jesus asked his disciples, 'Who do you say I am?' marked a turning point in the gospel of Mark. Having established in the minds of the disciples that he is indeed the Messiah, Jesus now begins to explore with them what that really means and also what it means to be a follower – a disciple – of the Messiah who must be put to death. Having finally come to some level of understanding that Jesus is the Messiah, the disciples have latched on to a very limited understanding of Jesus' Messiahship. They have assumed that being Messiah meant that Jesus was going to lead a triumphant victory over all the woes of the Jews – it was a common understanding and expectation of what the Messiah would do. With this in mind, the disciples begin to argue amongst themselves about who will hold positions of respect and power in the aftermath of Jesus' great triumph. Despite what Jesus had just said about being put to death and rising again, the disciples simply couldn't grasp what he was saying and fell back onto a familiar picture of the Messiah.

To really shake up the disciples and try to make them pay attention to what he was saying to them, Jesus put his arms around a small child and told the disciples they had to welcome little children in his name. Like so many gospel images there is more going on here than meets the eye. Children were regarded as complete nobodies in the culture of the time. They had no status and absolutely no authority. Jesus is saying to the disciples, don't argue about who will be the greatest; this child – this nobody – is greater than anyone who lords it over others. If you treat a nobody like this with respect, you treat me with respect.

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## Gospel Mk 9:30-37

*The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of humanity ... All who wish to be first must make themselves the servants of all.*

After leaving the mountain Jesus and his disciples made their way through Galilee; and he did not want anyone to know, because he was instructing his disciples; he was telling them, 'The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men; they will put him to death; and three days after he has been put to death he will rise again.' But they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him.

They came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' They said nothing because they had been arguing which of them was the greatest. So he sat down, called the Twelve to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all.' He then took a little child, set him in front of them, put his arms round him, and said to them, 'Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

## First Reading Wis 2:12, 17-20

*Let us condemn him to a most shameful death.*

The godless say to themselves,

'Let us lie in wait for the virtuous man, since he annoys us and opposes our way of life, reproaches us for our breaches of the law

and accuses us of playing false to our upbringing.

Let us see if what he says is true, let us observe what kind of end he himself will have.

If the virtuous man is God's son, God will take his part and rescue him from the clutches of his enemies.

Let us test him with cruelty and with torture,

and thus explore this gentleness of his and put his endurance to the proof.

Let us condemn him to a shameful death since he will be looked after – we have his word for it.'

## Responsorial Psalm

**Ps 53:3-6. 8. R. v.6**

*(R.) The Lord upholds my life.*

1. O God, save me by your name; by your power, uphold my cause. O God, hear my prayers; listen to the words of my mouth. (R.)
2. For proud men have risen against me, ruthless men seek my life. They have no regard for God. (R.)

3. But I have God for my help. The Lord upholds my life. I will sacrifice to you with willing heart and praise your name for it is good. (R.)

## Second Reading Jas 3:16-4:3

*Justice is the harvest of peacemakers from seeds sown in a spirit of peace.*

Wherever you find jealousy and ambition, you find disharmony, and wicked things of every kind being done; whereas the wisdom that comes down from above is essentially something pure; it also makes for peace, and is kindly and considerate; it is full of compassion and shows itself by doing good; nor is there any trace of partiality or hypocrisy in it. Peacemakers, when they work for peace, sow the seeds which will bear fruit in holiness.

Where do these wars and battles between yourselves first start? Isn't it precisely in the desires fighting inside your own selves? You want something and you haven't got it; so you are prepared to kill. You have an ambition that you cannot satisfy; so you fight to get your way by force. Why you don't have what you want is because you don't pray for it; when you do pray and don't get it, it is because you have not prayed properly, you have prayed for something to indulge your own desires.

## Gospel Acclamation See 2 Thes 2:14

**Alleluia, alleluia!**

**God has called us with the gospel**

**to share in the glory of our**

**Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Alleluia!**