

EVERY LIFE
is precious in God's sight.

OCTOBER MESSAGE SERIES
WEEK 3 – OCTOBER 17, 2021



October is Respect Life Month. We are calling these first four weeks of October, **“Every Life,”** with the goal of reinforcing that every life is precious in God's eyes, every life begins with God and hopefully ends with God, every life stands as testimony to that sacred covenant forged between God and His created order – a covenant of dignity, purpose and peace.

This Week: Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Gospel of Mark: 10:35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” He replied, “What do you wish me to do for you?” They answered him, “Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left.” Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” They said to him, “We can.” Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink, you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared.” When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John. Jesus summoned them and said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

Isaiah 53:10-11: “The Lord was pleased to crush him in infirmity”. We need to remember that what pleased God was not the suffering of the servant but rather the servant's willingness to carry out his mission—even if it meant suffering and pain. By meditating on such passages, early Christians came to understand why Jesus had to suffer.

Hebrews 4:14-16 reminds us that the Son of God suffered, was tempted, and died for us. He is not distant from the reality that sin is among us, or that pain and sorrow affect us.

Mark 10:35-45 is filled with misunderstandings and paradoxes. James and John seek places of prominence in Jesus' kingdom. They represent that part of us that desires to wield power. Jesus offers a reversal of the common perception of authority in the Kingdom he is inaugurating: "Any one among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest." This Gospel challenges us to see ourselves as servants – and to see those we serve as precious as they are seen through the loving eyes of God.

- **Is God the loving person we say God is?** With some stories in Scripture, do we question why God allows suffering? Can you think of examples where God used the suffering, even the death of people, to bring justice? Have you seen or experienced greater good out of suffering?

- **It comes down to this: Your life is not about you (at least in the way modern society might have us think).** How difficult is that to live up to – a life centered on Christ and those around you, but not you? The world pushes us to climb the ladder of success and to be powerful. Christ tells us to be humble servants. The world tells us that "great" people are those with prominent positions. Jesus tells us that great people are those who humbly serve others. How do you come to terms with this in your head? In your heart?

- **Share what may help us to develop a humble servant-like spirit** that Jesus speaks about, a spirit that was present in the life of St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta?

EXPLORE OUR CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING – Option for the Poor

Jesus' teaching on authority and service is linked to the central commandment to love God and neighbor. Our Catholic Social Teaching brings that to action, underscoring respect for the dignity of the human person, practiced through justice for the poor and the vulnerable. This is the "preferred" way of discipleship.

Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: *A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.*

- 'The measure of the greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty!' - *Pope Francis, July 26, 2013*
Do you know anyone living in poverty? Do you know their story that led to those circumstances? How can you/have you accompanied them? Is there common ground? What holds us back from developing those relationships – and closing the gap on division?
- "You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor man, but you are giving him back what is his. You have been appropriating things that are meant to be for the common use of everyone. The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich." *St. Ambrose, Populorum Progressio, #23, 1967*
Can you think of one thing you could do to give back to the poor what belongs to the poor? On your own? As a small group?

This month, our parish joins other churches in the Diocese with special collections in support of our Sister Diocese in the Dominican Republic (Oct. 17) and Catholic Charities (Oct. 24). This year, organizations serving our brothers and sisters most in need have been greatly impacted by the pandemic. PRAY for their missions and the poor and vulnerable who count on them.

