

## **Bulletin Reflection 2021.09.19. Year B1. Week 25. Ordinary Time.**

### Service is the true measure of greatness

How do the godless operate? The Book of Wisdom lays bare the evil inclinations of the unrighteous, who despise the virtuous for showing them up. They choose not to repent but attempt to hide their malice by eliminating the righteous, even if the target happens to be God's own Son. They would test him with cruelty, torture, and a shameful death. Then they would justify their wicked deeds by expecting that "God will... rescue him from the clutches of his enemies." Yet eventually as this prophecy materialised, God did not spare His Son but allowed him to suffer and die at their hands.

But how could Jesus' enemies be so mistaken? To them, privilege went hand-in-hand with status. Accordingly, they believed God's True Heir should be supremely entitled, hence the claim: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him." (Mt 27:40, 42) Alas, for the Only-Begotten Son the opposite would be true, as he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Mt 27:46) Ironically, precisely at his least privileged moment, Jesus' Divine Sonship became so evident that even the pagan witnesses exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Mt 27:54)

Our world tends to measure a person's importance by his privileges. But for God, it appears greatness is demonstrated by a person's willingness to obey and serve Him. Likewise, Jesus was shown to be the Son of God, not by enjoying many temporal privileges but by his 'obedience unto death, even death on a Cross.' (Phil 2:8) Yet even his apostles found this divine perspective difficult to adopt, as even after discovering the identity of Christ they argued about which of them was the greatest. But why would they covet such a distinction? Because they must have presumed tangible perks and advantages attached to it. Had they understood properly the significance of Christ's Passion and Death, they probably wouldn't vie for a title that could potentially mean greater sacrifice and martyrdom. Perhaps this explains why they asked no further questions about the Lord's gruesome fate. They were 'too afraid' to equate greatness with suffering – at least not yet! So they reverted to their old way of thinking like men rather than God (C.f. Mk 8:33), avoiding the cross, yet willing to fight for worldly status and privilege.

Christ said thus, "If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all." He then took a little child as an example of such humility and meekness. Likewise, if we genuinely desire to be great disciples, we ought not to pursue greater temporal privileges but obedience and commitment to God. For according to Christ, true measure of greatness is the degree with which we love and serve God and our neighbours.