

Great Leaders are Servant Leaders
October 17, 2021, Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Gospel of Mark 10:35-45
Fr. John

'For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in **every respect** has been tested as we are, - yet without sin'.

The letter to the Hebrews, from which is taken the second reading for today, makes the point that Jesus does more than understand our human situation, he has **endured every inch** of our way of suffering.

There is a difference in listening and hearing about another person's story when it hasn't been our own. But when we've **been** there and had the same experience, there is a much greater depth of understanding and empathy. That is basically what the author of the letter to the Hebrews is trying to get across to us. That's what God has done in the person of Jesus. This was no quick visit or photo op session for the purpose 'touching base' or having a short interview. Jesus truly endured what human beings - especially the poor and the marginalised go through.

So, for example, I can venture down to the camp Margery at Pepsi Park on 11th Avenue in Regina, and view the scene there with the homeless living in tents. I can listen to the stories of Indigenous people who endured the trauma of residential institutions. I can visit with LGBTQ persons and hear their stories of exclusion and non acceptance. But I have the option of disengaging from that and escaping to my own comfort zone with the securities and the privileges that I take for granted.

For Jesus there was no escape, no trap door for him to disappear when danger came. His commitment ended with the cross and he was quite direct in letting his disciples, [if they were to remain his disciples,] know that that would have to be their commitment as well.

So what message do the scriptures in today's liturgy have to relay to us?

Well, unfortunately, though many of us in the Church have been the recipients of a very rich spiritual tradition, we have sometime found ourselves on the wrong side of the Gospel. Like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, many of whom were probably very good people, we have been very good at carrying out the required practices required by the Church that identify us as Catholics. We attend Mass, receive the sacraments and generally comply with the authority of our faith tradition. And that's all well and good. However the 'nitty gritty' comes when we are confronted with some of the situations mentioned. What are our attitudes about these situations and what is our response? And like the saying on the wristband that was popular a few years ago: 'What Would Jesus Do?' [WWJD]

Maybe rather than spending our time demanding our religious rights and liberties, [especially during these difficult days of the Covid pandemic] we could be saying 'How can I help?' 'How can I make this community a better place for everyone?' Did not our Lord remind his disciples who were vying for entitlement roles in his 'Kingdom': "...whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.'

There's an old saying that I keep on my workstation at home that says: 'Humble people **don't think less of themselves**, they just think of themselves **less**.'

The other day, when I returned from a week's holiday, in among the mail was a letter from someone named Al [who I didn't know]. He identified himself as a Jehovah's Witness and was inviting me to comply with current Public Health guidelines [which I thought was a little unexpected considering some of the beliefs of that faith]. However, he went on in his rather brief letter to state his belief in the equality of all races [quoting Acts 10:34-35] and what God intends for humankind, namely that men and women of all tribes, peoples and tongues will serve God in unity, demonstrating their love for their fellow man. [Rv. 7:9-10]

Well, Al and I are on the same page on that one [as one JW to another - my initials are JW].

Maybe that's a good start in being instruments of unity in our often polarized and divided world.

And in the words of the letter to the Hebrews 'Let us approach the throne of grace with boldness so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.'