

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

A little boy was overheard talking to himself as he strutted through the backyard, wearing his baseball cap, and toting a ball and bat. "I'm the greatest hitter in the world," he announced. Then, he tossed the ball into the air, swung at it, and missed. "Strike One!" he yelled. Undaunted, he picked up the ball and said again, "I'm the greatest hitter in the world!"

He tossed the ball into the air. When it came down, he swung again and missed. "Strike Two!" he cried. The boy then paused a moment to examine his bat and ball carefully. He spat on his hands and rubbed them together. He straightened his cap and said once more, "I'm the greatest hitter in the world!"

Again, he tossed the ball up in the air and swung at it. He missed. "Strike Three!" "Wow!" he exclaimed. "I'm the greatest pitcher in the world!"

Dear Friends,

As human beings, we like to be recognized somewhere in our life, as a child, as young adult, as adults. Our minds need some recognition either in our homes, or in our workplaces, among friends and in other places. We seek those in different ways.

Today's readings help us to seek recognition with God in surrendering ourselves to God. In the first reading, Book of Wisdom brings the conversation of a wicked man against the Just one. There was a hostility between the traditional Jewish people and those who turned away to pagan culture and God. The Jewish people who converted themselves because of force called the other Jews as Just ones. So, they tried to ridicule the just ones who were faithful to Yahweh. They condemn the just to a shameful death which, in their eyes, will prove that God does not defend them.

In the second reading, James mentions that everyone must work on rooting our personal wicked habits. He writes that those who seek recognition or insist on getting their own way, are not yet living by wisdom from above. He asks us to wage a war in our inner selves and surrender ourselves to divine wisdom who would bring peace.

In the Gospel, there is an ironic contrast between Jesus' second prediction of his passion, and the disciples' argument about which of them is the greatest. There are only two possible options.

First Possibility: Each disciple was saying, "I am the greatest!" while the others were saying, "Oh no, you're not! I am!"

Second Possibility: Each disciple was saying to one of the others, "You are the greatest among us!" and that person was saying, "Oh no, I'm not. You are."

On the first possibility, each disciple is trying to put himself ahead of all the others. On the second possibility, each disciple is trying to be small by putting some other disciple ahead of himself.

Jesus never condemned the apostles wanting to be great. He taught them how to be great. The disciples thought of having a greatest life following Jesus and became reputed people in their region.

Jesus' real power was rooted in a certain vulnerability, like the powerlessness of a child. For God, everyone is important, and he loves every one of us. Being greatest would be being humble and surrender ourselves to God. Jesus showed a great example to all of us. we read it in Philippians 2: 5-11. Each person is called to strive for greatness by accepting the gifts God gives him and uses in a humble way.

True humility lies in understanding that everything is a gift; and everything is meant to be given back, in service to others. When each person strives for greatness in this way, there is no competition. No one is ahead of the others, no matter how much greatness he achieves. Rather, all together we are one in the Lord, and he is Lord over all (Rom. 9:5). This is the way in which being the servant of all makes you first.