

## 29B

*The Abbot in a particular monastery thought that three of his monks were suffering from the sin of pride. So he summoned them to his study and asked them in turn to explain themselves. The first one said apologetically: "I'm a nobody". The second also said: "I'm also a nobody". And the third one looked with disdain at the other two and said: "Well, well, look who think they're nobodies".*

James and John seem to be overstating their importance by hinting that Jesus should give them the best seats in the Kingdom of heaven. The other apostles understandably felt indignant at the pushiness of the two brothers.

This provided Jesus with an ideal opportunity to teach His disciples a very important lesson. They must avoid the power games which people play in the world. At the last Supper, as a gesture of humility, Jesus washed the apostles' feet and asked them to copy what He had done. If you remember, Peter refused and Jesus told him bluntly that if he wasn't prepared to be a lowly servant of God, their friendship was at an end. Peter 'changed his tune' immediately.

Today is designated as World Mission Sunday. Jesus sent the apostles out on a mission to preach the gospel. But their words will only resonate with people who have the same spirit of humility as Jesus 'who did not come to be served but to serve'. James and John were looking for short cuts to the Kingdom of Heaven but Jesus told them there were none. Humble service of others is very much tied up with taking on a submissive role which doesn't come naturally for most people. Without fully realising it, most of us are probably doing it all the time.

Even The Church itself has not been immune from playing power games. At our clergy conference in Scarborough one of the talks was about the influence which the Second Vatican Council had on the Church over the past 50 years. Well I would

say that we are a humbler, less triumphalist church now than in pre Vatican11 days. The present Holy Father is leading the way in this regard. During his trip to America recently he travelled about in an ordinary little car. The pomp and ceremony associated with Popes seems to be on the way out. I think we're all the better for it.

Service towards others, however, doesn't at all mean devaluing our vocation or downplaying our talents. It is false humility not to acknowledge the gifts God has given us.

Missionary activity always involves the humiliation of the Cross. That is why Jesus asked James and John if they were prepared to drink the cup of suffering which He was soon to drink. If not, they might be merely on an ego trip and overlook the real needs of those whom they're sent to serve.

*Worldly leaders tend to 'push their weight around' as Jesus said but we, as **his** followers, are advised not to go down that road. Otherwise our mission to spread the Gospel becomes well-nigh impossible.*