

## 29 B

*A wolf, roaming by the mountain's side, saw his own shadow, as the sun was setting, become greatly extended and magnified, and he said to himself, 'Why should I, being of such an immense size, and extending nearly an acre in length be afraid of the Lion? Ought I not to be acknowledged as King of all the collected beasts?' While he was indulging in these proud thoughts, a Lion fell upon him and killed him. He exclaimed with too late a repentance, 'Wretched me! - this over-estimation of myself is the cause of my downfall.'*

James and John seem to be overrating their importance by begging Jesus to give them the best seats in heaven. The other apostles understandably felt irate at the pushiness of the two brothers.

This provided Jesus with an ideal opportunity to teach them a very important lesson. They must avoid the power games which people play in the world. At the last Supper, if you remember Jesus performed the menial task of washing the apostles' feet and then asked them to copy what He had done. When Peter refused Jesus told him bluntly that if he wasn't prepared to 'eat humble pie, their friendship was terminated.

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 humbleness as Jesus 'who did not come to be served but to serve'. James and John were pressing Jesus to reserve seats for them at the top table in Heaven without having to 'muddy their hands', as it were, here on earth. Humble service of others involves taking on a more unassuming role which doesn't come naturally to most people. However, without fully realising it, most of us take our responsibilities towards others 'in our stride' without much 'song or dance'. Look at all the unpretentious, often unnoticed tasks you do week after week

for others both within and outside your family without seeking any reward.

Even The Church itself has not been immune from playing power games. At a clergy some time back one of the items under discussion was about how the church had changed since the ending of the Second Vatican over 50 years ago. Well I would say that we are a more chastened, less triumphalist church now than in the past which is more in line with today's gospel. During the Holy Father's trip to America a couple of years ago, for instance, he travelled about in an ordinary little car to be more in tune with the ordinary man and woman in the street.

Service towards others, however, doesn't at all mean devaluing 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 and humiliation 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 were sent to serve.

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