September 12, 2021

24th Sunday, Year B

***Deaf to Jesus’ message***

Three times in Mark’s gospel, Jesus will tell his disciples about his future which will be about suffering, death and resurrection. Each time the disciples are unable to hear him.

These three instances occur in chapters eight, nine, and ten around verse thirty. In chapter eight, Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah, but subsequent verses show that he has little understanding of the kind of Messiah that Jesus will be. When Peter tries to rebuke Jesus and tell him that this is not the envisaged future, Jesus definitively tells Peter that the future will involve every disciple taking up the cross if they are to be the followers of Jesus.

In chapter nine, Jesus again tells the disciples that he will be betrayed, killed, and three days later rise again, but they did not know what he was talking about. When they arrived in Capernaum, he asked what they were arguing about, but they were embarrassed as they had been arguing with one another about who was the greatest.

In chapter ten, after the disciples were looking for reward for leaving behind their families and their security in following Jesus, he affirms that they will be rewarded, but not in the ways that they expected in terms of material rewards in this life but in life hereafter. He explains that he will suffer, die, and rise, but again they are deaf to his words and James and John come forward and ask if they can sit on the right and the left of Jesus in his kingdom.

It is only at the end of the gospel, when they meet the risen Lord and are commissioned to proclaim the good news to all nations that they begin to understand.

In reading Mark’s gospel, one must wonder why the disciples were so deaf to the message of Jesus which was clearly communicated. I think that the answer lies in the expectations of the disciples. They are Jewish and the Jewish people had longed hoped for a Messiah. They had various understandings of who the Messiah would be and what he would do.

Some hoped for a Messiah who would free them from the oppression of the occupying power which at this time was the Romans. Some hoped that their nation would be restored to the stature it had enjoyed under the reign of King David. Others, hoped for religious reform, but almost no one understood that the Messiah would proclaim and inaugurate the “kingdom of God” as a promise of God’s salvation and hope for the transformation of the world.

We can take comfort in the fact that the first disciples did not understand for we can also be slow in understanding a suffering Messiah and accepting the challenge of the cross in living lives according to the values of Jesus rather than the values of self-achievement. The life of Jesus ever invites us to reflect and review the directions of our own lives.

Michael A Kelly CSsR

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**We respond**

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Give peace, O Lord, to those who wait for you, that your prophets be found true. Hear the prayers of your servant, and of your people Israel.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 114)

Antiphon: I will walk in the presence of the Lord, in the land of the living.

RESPONSE: **I will walk in the presence of the Lord, in the land of the living.**

LECTOR: I love the Lord for he has heard the cry of my appeal; for he turned his ear to me in the day when I called him. R.

LECTOR: They surrounded me, the snares of death, with the anguish of the tomb; they caught me, sorrow and distress. I called on the Lord’s name. O Lord my God, deliver me! R.

LECTOR: How gracious is the Lord, and just; our God has compassion. The Lord protects the simple hearts; I was helpless so he saved me. R.

LECTOR: He has kept my soul from death, my eyes from tears and my feet from stumbling. I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living. R.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! My only glory is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, which crucifies the world to me and me to the world. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn)

How precious is your mercy, O God! The children of men seek shelter in the shadow of your wings.

Or

The chalice of blessing that we bless is a communion in the Blood of Christ; and the bread that we break is a sharing in the Body of the Lord.

TODAY’S READINGS Isaiah 50:5-9; James 2:14-18; Mark 8:27-35

NEXT WEEK (25th Sunday of Year B) Wisdom 2:12,17-20; Psalm 53; James 3:16-4:3; Mark 9:30-37