

29 Sunday B

October 21, 2018

St. Patrick

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We heard from the Scriptures this Sunday: **“Through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear.”**

Jesus never gave the twelve apostles a pink slip—letting them go, firing them.

He should have. Jesus had every reason to dismiss the Twelve, let them go, and start with a fresh, new batch of apostles. You see, St. Patrick’s, we’re right in the center, the heart, of St. Mark’s Gospel. In these middle three chapters, for the first time in that Gospel, Jesus clearly teaches the Twelve that he’s going to meet a violent, torturous death. He tells them three different times in this main section of St. Mark’s Gospel.

In fact, the verse right before today’s Gospel has Jesus teaching them the third time, speaking of himself as the Son of Man, and the religious leaders will **“mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him.”** Three times Jesus tells them, teaches the Twelve. You’d think they would be stunned to silence, painfully letting it set in that their Jesus would be treated like that.

Jesus should have given them a pink slip. You see, the very next verse, the two brothers James and John asked Jesus if they could have the two top spots in his cabinet when he makes it big, and gains all the power. And the other ten apostles...well, they get all stirred up, jealous that they didn’t think of it first. They want their own share of the power when Jesus becomes top dog.

Through it all, even as they fled from Calvary as Jesus was penned to the cross, he didn’t fire them. He didn’t let them go. And, you know, this Sunday the Risen Jesus doesn’t give any of us a pink slip. He never has. As the Scriptures tell us, this Jesus is our **“great high priest...who has been similarly tested in every way (as all of us), yet without sin.”** Rather than firing us, letting us go because we’ve blown it too many times—instead, we hear these precious words: **“So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy...”**

Jesus always gives us reckless mercy...just as he did to the Twelve. Then, when Jesus was raised up from the dead, he re-tooled the Twelve—and all of us!—with

the gift of his Holy Spirit. All along, he keeps teaching us what greatness means under his Kingship, and it's not the two top cabinet places! Listen to Jesus teach us clearly: **“Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all.”**

The first, becoming last. The great, becoming the servant of all.

In my first year here at St. Patrick's, I've seen so many of you letting Jesus form you into the greatness of *his* hopes. I've seen those at the food outreach ministry of our St. Patrick Center. Some of you prepare the food; others serve it, or give out foodstuffs to those in need. Oh, I've seen you greet our guests, looking them in the eyes, and receiving them with the dignity they deserve. You see Jesus in each guest, and he is!

I've also seen you become the “servant of all” when you, as catechists, have had the humility to recognize the deep spiritual yearnings in even our youngest children. You have lovingly sought to nurture their closeness with the Good Shepherd and their fuller participation in the life of the church. Yes, you've taken in what Jesus taught us three Sundays ago: **“Let the children come to me...for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”**

Oh, over these months, different ones of you have come with your tools and your talents—like some of you did yesterday on the “clean-up” day here. You've done the grunt work, the little stuff—as one parishioner put it, the “worker bees”—that helps to make our parish buildings and grounds a welcoming home. You've put in so many hours, heeding Jesus call to **“be slave of all.”**

And this is a big Sunday for the citizens' organization, MICAH, of which St. Patrick is a part. There are parishioners who are working with others in the city to make justice more than a slogan. It looks to what will happen on the site nearby of the former Foote Homes. It looks at other issues which call out for justice.

Oh, in all of this, “ego” can creep in, and we become like the original Twelve, maneuvering for “name recognition.” It's always a temptation, but I haven't detected it. In myriad ways--some that I or others don't notice--so many of you have shown your greatness according to Kingdom standards by serving humbly.

Yes, St. Patrick's: Open our hearts that Jesus can form *us* as his “servant” leaders! Open our eyes to see how he turns everything upside down: The first, becoming last. The great, becoming the servant of all.

## **General Intercessions**

**October 21, 2018**

**29<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Strengthen you church in “servant” leadership, and deepen our love for professing the Gospel in our daily lives; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Gift religious and political leaders with integrity, right judgment, and compassion for the poor; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Relieve those who are suffering from Hurricane Michael and Hurricane Florence, and all those facing natural disasters; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Support efforts to help those who are fleeing from danger, especially immigrants and refugees; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Encourage all young people to grow in their faith and to follow the Lord’s call in their lives; we pray to you, O Lord—**