

Pentecost 17, 20/9/2015, Holy Trinity

Mark 9:30-37

Can you imagine Jesus as he was with the disciples and the crowds that often followed him, looking at them and thinking to himself something like “Here we go again. I try to teach them something important and either they don’t listen, or they don’t understand and are too frightened to ask”.

In this morning’s Gospel reading, Jesus for the second time in two weeks foretells of his Passion, Death and Resurrection.

And for the second week, they do not understand what is being said in this part of Jesus’ teaching.

It was not very long since Peter had proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God that is, the Messiah, the Anointed One from God.

They were not looking, however, for a Messiah who was predicting his Passion, Death and Resurrection.

They were expecting a very different role for the Messiah.

They were not expecting a servant/slave Messiah.

Yet, this is what we have today: Jesus, the Son of the living God, the Servant King.

Are we able to accept this, Jesus the servant King whom we serve as his servant and through him a servant in the world?

Servanthood was not popular at the time of Jesus on earth and it certainly doesn’t win a popularity stakes today.

Human beings have mostly attributed value to power.

So the person who has power through wealth is considered to have value in the eyes of others.

Likewise, those who have political power, or intellectual power, or business power or family power have value in society.

In politics, in business and in many other areas of society the only way to impress on others a sense of one’s own importance is to put others down, to make them feel inferior, to make them feel that they are a servant who is inferior to the person with power and who are of much less value to society.

This is still the way of the world: the way that many people think.

While all of this was happening, the disciples were discussing who was greatest among them.

Was it Peter or John or Andrew or James or was it all of the twelve who are greater than the other followers of Jesus at that time?

You know what Jesus did or what he did not do.

He didn't rebuke them, or scold them.

He took a child, stood him in their midst, embraced him, and said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. And whoever receives me receives not me but the one who sent me."

The image of the child throws the focus on lowliness.

The child is vulnerable.

The child is the one for whom caring is important.

The child is one who is unable to care for her/himself.

Caring for vulnerable human beings is part of what caring is about.

To take on a vulnerable human being, baby, child, young person or adult is to take on Jesus and to take on Jesus is to take on God.

This is where our parish's taking on board social and environmental justice is not just important but absolutely necessary if we are to be faithful to our parish vision "to shine as one in Christ that God's will be done".

It is as we, the community of the Body of Christ in this place, shine as one in Christ that we have solidarity in our servanthood and our vulnerability and we affirm this in acts of caring and love within our community of faith, within the wider community and the world at large.

Where do we, the community of the Body of Christ meeting in this place, sacrifice our time, our talents, our treasures, ourselves for the sake of others even when they do not realise it or appreciate it?

Can we answer this as we look towards a new phase in our parish life as we work with a different rector?