

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Today's readings see leadership and power positions within the framework of service. They reserve accolades for those who choose to meet the needs of others.

In the first reading, an unknown prophet in 540 BC begs the exiled community to respond to God's call to return home to Israel. In the language of sacrifice, the Servant is an offering for sin. By accepting this call, the Servant suffers on behalf of all the people. The outcome is reconciliation with God.

In the second reading, Jesus self-giving is the model and source of encouragement for the author's audience. While speaking of His divinity, he does not belittle His humanity. His lowliness is linked to his exaltation. Through His temptations he can relate to His people. Believers can approach God more confidently because of His experiences.

In the Gospel, Jesus prediction of his fate leads to the disciples' misunderstanding. James and John seek positions of honor when Jesus enters upon his glory. This leads to instruction on the nature of Christian discipleship. Jesus points out that real honor is bound up with suffering. The "cup" is nothing less than the passion. Those who aspire to greatness in Jesus' kingdom must be servants. To serve and not be served is the privilege and the obligation of status.