



# Bible Study Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B

St. Maria Goretti St. Peter  
Claver, St. Joan of Arc, St.  
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**“...Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mk. 10:43-45 NABRE**

## Reading I: Isaiah 53:10-11

**Can You Drink the Cup of Service?** "The world tells us to seek success, power and money; God tells us to seek humility, service and love." ~ Pope Francis. This quote is inspiring until we realize that humility, love and service require suffering of some sort. When we adopt a way of life in which we serve God by serving others even if it entails suffering and personal loss, we have adopted the role of a "suffering servant." A suffering servant accepts personal suffering because of his/her love and service of others. The suffering of such a servant is not accidental. It is a deliberate acceptance of personal suffering for the benefit of others. Such service imitates Jesus, the Suffering Servant, who came into this world to atone for the



**Public Service – means Service to “the Many.”**

sins of “many.” A suffering servant drinks the cup of personal danger and suffering as he/serves.

The first reading is taken from the fourth Song of the Suffering Servant which is usually read on Good Friday. It predicts the extent of the service accepted by Jesus on our behalf. (See also, Isa. 52:13-53:12) He predicts that Jesus will be crushed in pain and offer Himself to justify, that is, make right, the failings of “the many” (v. 10-11). The role of the Suffering Servant is to give His life as an offering for the sins of the many. St. Paul develops this insight in Rom. 3:24, and 1 Cor. 7:23. In Galatians 3:13 he proclaims that Christ released us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. Likewise, verse 11, calls for the servant to willingly drink the cup of pain to compensate for or repair the pain caused by others. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** What is your response to the gift of infinite value, the life of Jesus, the Suffering Servant? Do you believe that serving others is the only path to “real glory” in heaven?

## THE REMISSION OF SINS

### The Jewish Scapegoat – the Goat of Azazel

The derivation of the term is not really clear. Scapegoat was a live goat over whose head Aaron confessed all the sins of the children of Israel. (Lev 16:8-26; RSV).

“The scapegoat was one of two goats that served as a sin offering on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:5). One of the goats was sacrificed as a part of the sin offering (Lev 16:9). The other was kept alive so it could be taken into the wilderness by an escort (Lev 16:10, 21). The person who released the goat was to wash his clothes and bathe afterwards (Lev 16:26). The goat symbolized the removal of the sins of the people into an uninhabited land (Lev 16:21-22). The process represented the transfer of guilt from the people of Israel, the complete removal of guilt from their midst.” (From Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

## Reading II: Hebrews 4:14-16

**Can You Drink the Cup of Service?** In this sermon to Jewish Christians, the writer expands the theme of the role and activity of Jesus Christ as a unique High Priest. This is a contrast from the image of the suffering servant that permeates the other readings for this Sunday. In this reading Jesus is credited with having extinguished the elaborate Old Testament sacrificial rituals by His own death on behalf of all. Therefore, the Old Testament is seen as the Word of God that reveals the meaning of Jesus’ death and resurrection. It is through the Old Testament we see the faithfulness of God by revealing Himself in the form of His only Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

The introduction of Jesus as High Priest in the Letter to the Hebrews was given in 2:17, where Jesus is referred to as merciful and faithful. In 5:1-10 the mercy of Jesus is rooted in His sharing our human nature to the point of sustaining temptation, without yielding to sin. Note that the author tells us to hold fast to our confessions v. 14. This may be a direct reference to the Old Testament, since prophets like Isaiah saw the coming of Jesus, the perfect High Priest. This confession should allow the Hebrews and us to confidently approach the “throne of Grace” (v. 16). It should give us the grace to embrace the cup of our sufferings on the altar of sacrifice, consecrated by Jesus, the Suffering Servant. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** With which quality of Jesus Christ do you most identify?

**Gospel: Mark 10:35-45**

**Can You Drink the Cup of Service?** "Sometimes the only way that the good Lord can get into some hearts is to break them", says the late Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. The request of James and John for superiority set them up for a divine heart break. They sought a cup of success rather than a cup of service. Is this why they accepted the call from Jesus? (1:19-20). Their request for prominence over other disciples appears in Mark's Gospel just after Jesus predicts His suffering and death for the third time (10:32-34). Some consider James' and John's request to be the same as the rich young man's attitude in 10:17-31. All three of them seek a position to which they claim entitlement and not as an object of God's grace. Perhaps they were so involved with the concept of glory that they did not hear the suffering and death part of Jesus' discussion. Note the positions that James and John sought made no reference to service but rather to power and position. Perhaps they saw themselves as the most eligible to share that power and glory with Jesus. To sit at the ruler's right or left hand was a sign of power and prestige. (1 Kng. 2:19) They obviously did not understand what the real meaning of "glory" as Jesus proclaimed it. They did not know that to be first in the "Glory" of Jesus – the Suffering Servant- required that he follows drink the cup of service to others.

The reference to the *cup* in v. 38 is an Old Testament metaphor for what God has in store for someone. It could be a cup of blessings (Ps 75:9; Isa 51:17-22). To Jesus, the drinking of the *cup* meant His complete acceptance of His saving mission. (Mk 14:16, Jn 18:11) This concept is carried further in the idea of baptism. *Baptism*, that is, immersion in water, is a metaphor for the passion of Christ that occurs also in Luke 12:50. It is an image of overwhelming change or tragedy (Ps 42:8). Jesus' baptism in the Jordan was also an image of His death. Consequently, Jesus' response to James and John refers to two sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist.

James and John should have anticipated the angry responses of the other disciples. But they did not anticipate Jesus' response. In verses 44-45, Jesus explains that His disciples are to be servants first. There is no place for self-promotion, rivalry or swaggering conduct among those who follow Jesus.

Jesus sums up His Messianic mission in verse 45, by telling the disciples that His mission is one of service for the "many" including those who would kill Him. Jesus came into the world not for personal gain or advantage, but for His demise. This is the price, the ransom, He paid for our sins. The word "many" is used to include everyone. Jesus gave Himself for the ransom of all. He saw His suffering coming and He embraced it (1 Tim 2:6). **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** To Jesus, a true leader is a servant. Can you name one person who leads others through the example of his/her service?

**PRAY ABOUT IT!**

**Monday**

Read Isaiah 52:13. Be kind to someone who has offended you.

**Tuesday**

Read Mark 10:44-45. Offer your services to a parish ministry.

**Wednesday**

Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Express your appreciation to those who serve your parish in ministry.

**Thursday**

Read Isaiah 53:12. Express your appreciation to those in public service.

**Friday**

Read Isaiah 53:11. Make a donation to the Second Harvest Foodbank.

**The Teachings of the Catechism of the Catholic Church  
–The Suffering Servant**

601 The Scriptures had foretold this divine plan of salvation through the putting to death of "the righteous one, my Servant" as a mystery of universal redemption, that is, as the ransom that would free men from the slavery of sin. Citing a confession of faith that he himself had "received," St. Paul professes that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures." In particular Jesus' redemptive death fulfills Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Servant. Indeed Jesus himself explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God's suffering Servant. After his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles.

**Resources:** Scapegoat - Easton's Bible Dictionary, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003, 2006 BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.); The Collegeville Bible Commentary *Old Testament, Isaiah-John J. Collins*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., pp 445-447; *The Gospel of Mark*, Peter S. Williamson and Mary Healy, General Editors, Baker Academics, (c) 2008. All rights reserved, 212-124. *The Collegeville Bible Commentary, New Testament – Mark - Philip Van Linden*, C. M. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn. pp 920-923 *The Collegeville Bible Commentary, New Testament – Hebrews – George W. McRae, S. J.*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn. pp. 1252-1253. Catechism of the Catholic Church for the United States of America copyright © 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc. –Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

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