

## Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

In Psychology they say that conflicts are Natural, Normal, and Neutral. However, we may all agree that most of us dislike conflict, and try to avoid it. When we find ourselves in conflict with a friend or family member, it bothers us. When we are in the midst of a conflict, we often long for it to be resolved, without always knowing what steps to take to resolve it. The longer it goes on, the harder it can be to deal with. It often takes someone who is outside of the conflict to help to resolve it.

In the Gospel reading this morning, we hear of a conflict among the disciples of Jesus. As someone who is external to the conflict, Jesus addressed himself to it, 'What were you arguing about?' The disciples were arguing among themselves as to which of them was the greatest. This may seem to us a rather silly argument. Yet, we can see how in many ways people are always fighting for greatness or power. Who is the BOSS here? And this may happen even in our families between wife and husband, and when it comes to the children that can result to the worst. I always say that if Jesus is welcomed in our homes, then they become the Kingdoms since Jesus is the King... There is no BOSS in our homes but Jesus. That is why they are called Christian families!

In the second reading this morning, James recognizes that a certain kind of ambition can lead to great conflict. 'You have an ambition that you cannot satisfy, so you fight to get your way by force'. In particular, the ambition to be the greater one, the desire to control and dominate, can often lead to what James calls 'wars and battles'.

Ambition, of course, is not in itself a bad thing. Jesus encourages his disciples to be ambitious, but he wants them to be ambitious to do things in God's way, rather than their own ways. A little earlier in Mark's gospel, Jesus had challenged the nature of Peter's ambition, 'You are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things' (Gospel of last Sunday). It seems that Jesus struggled to shape the ambitions of his disciples, so that they corresponded in some way to God's ambition.

In the gospel reading, Jesus puts before His disciples a different kind of ambition, the ambition to serve, (and I do not think we would like this one!) 'Anyone who wants to be first will make himself a servant of all'. This is the ambition that dominated the life of Jesus. The ambition to serve will often express itself in welcoming the least, those without status or influence in our world. That is why Jesus took a child and set the child before the disciples, calling on them to welcome the likes of a child, which means those not highly regarded; without power or prestige or status. Jesus was calling on His disciples to welcome and receive those who had nothing to give them.

We need to pray for this kind of ambition. James in the second reading speaks about the need to pray and to pray properly. We pray for what God wants. We pray that God's ambition for our lives. This is the prayer we make in the Our Father, 'thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. If our ambitions are to be shaped by God's ambition we need to keep on praying in this way. With this Prayer, we will avoid any kind of conflict and we will live in Peace.