

Feast of St. James

July 25th

Today is the Feast Day of the Apostle St. James, the brother of John, the son of Zebedee and Salome. Salome was one of the women who helped to supply for the needs of Jesus and the Apostles as we read in Luke 8. She was also present at the Cross. Matthew tells us:

55 There were also many women there, looking on from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him; 56 among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Just days before the crucifixion Salome had come with James and John to Jesus as described in the Gospel I just read. St Matthew describes their interaction with Jesus this way:

Salome comes in an attitude of prayer but she uses prayer to request what she sees as a good thing for her sons, but not a good thing in the service of the kingdom. She wanted her sons to have power and success. This is the criterion of greatness as defined by the world. Such is the spirit of the world.

Jesus however spoke of another kind of greatness.

In the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* (The Joys and Hopes) the Council Fathers write:

"Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

Our most high calling and true greatness is found through self-offering and service to others. It is the greatness tied to sharing in the cup of Jesus' passion and life so that James and John would learn that it is in the self-offering our lives that true greatness is discovered, and their most high calling realized.

Pope Saint John Paul the Second in reflecting on true greatness spoke at Santiago de Compostela in August 1989. It was the World Youth Day Mass held at the Tomb of St. James the Apostle. This is what the Pope said about true greatness:

Because we have been created, we have been called, we have been destined, first and foremost, to serve God, in the image and likeness of Christ who, as Lord of all creation, as centre of the cosmos and of history, showed his royal power through obedience unto death, and was glorified in the Resurrection (cfr. Lumen Gentium, 36). The kingdom of God is realized by means of this "service", which is the fullness and measure of all human service. It does not act according to human criterion through power, might and money. Each one of us is asked for a total readiness to follow Christ, who "came not to be served, but to serve".

Such a way of greatness is not natural to us but supernatural. When like James we discover to lay down our lives for Jesus and his kingdom the Holy Spirit can work in our souls so that with Paul we can affirm:

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.

St James discovered this extradentary power, made present through the way of self-surrender so that the Church now prays:

*Almighty ever-living God,
who consecrated the first fruits of your Apostles
by the blood of Saint James,
grant, we pray,
that your Church may be strengthened by his confession of faith
and constantly sustained by his protection.¹*

¹ [*The Roman Missal: Renewed by Decree of the Most Holy Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI and Revised at the Direction of Pope John Paul II.*](#) (2011). (Third Typical Edition, p. 907). Washington D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.