

JULY 25, 2020  
Feast of St. James the Great, Apostle  
Matthew 20: 20-28

“TO BE GREAT IS TO SERVE”

It is nice to be first, esteemed and honored by others. It's great to be recognized, famous, with authority and power. This is different from what Jesus wants from us Christians and followers of Him. As we celebrate today the feast of St. James the Great, Jesus is teaching us that to be great in the eyes of God is to be servants of all “just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”<sup>1</sup> He did the opposite in dealing with power, authority and greatness. He made Himself an example to imitate and follow. “Jesus wedded authority with love, position with sacrifice, and service with humility. Authority without love is over-bearing and slavish. Position without respect and concern for the subordinate is demeaning and rude. And service without generosity and sacrifice is cheap and unkind.”<sup>2</sup> What we are is nothing if we are not humble and ready for service. For Christians, greatness is nothing else but service and love for God and neighbors. If we are really Christians and followers of Christ, we must be ready to be of service to others, thinking not of the reward here on earth but in heaven by accumulating treasures of heaven. He reminded us also, like what He said to James and John, “Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?”<sup>3</sup> To serve the Lord and the willingness to ‘be great’ entails sacrifices. We must be prepared to sacrifice not only of our talents, treasures, time, money, and resources but our whole lives. and all that we have. “His disciples must drink His cup if they expect to reign with Him in His kingdom. The cup He had in mind was a bitter one involving crucifixion. For some disciples such a cup entails physical suffering and the painful struggle of martyrdom. But for many, it entails the long routine of the Christian life, with all its daily sacrifices, disappointments, set-backs,

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 20: 28 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

<sup>2</sup> [www.dailyscripture.net](http://www.dailyscripture.net)

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 20: 22 NRSV Catholic Bible Press USA

struggles, and temptations. A disciple of Jesus must be ready to lay down his or her life - each and every day in the little and big sacrifices required - and even to the point of shedding one's blood if necessary for the sake of Christ and His Gospel."<sup>4</sup>

St. James was the son of Zebedee and brother of St. John. He was privileged witness of the Transfiguration along with Peter and John and was at the agony in the garden. He was a fisherman and one of the first disciples to follow the way of the Lord. In the Gospel of St. Mark (Mk 3: 17), he and his brother John called in their nickname 'Boanerges' or 'Sons of Thunder.' According to tradition, "following Christ's Ascension, James spread the Gospel across Israel and the Roman kingdom as well. He traveled and spread the Word for nearly forty years in Spain. It is said that one day, as he prayed, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to him and asked him to build her a church, which he did. Later, James returned to Jerusalem but was martyred for his faith by King Herod, who decapitated him. St. James the Greater is known as the first apostle to die. As he was not allowed to be buried following his martyrdom, his remains were taken to Compostela, Spain, by some of his followers, who buried him. In the ninth century his remains were discovered and moved to a tomb in Santiago de Compostela. Today, his remains can still be found in the Cathedral of Santiago. Because Santiago de Compostela is the most frequently visited place for pilgrims following Rome and Jerusalem, Pope Leo declared it a shrine."<sup>5</sup>

My brothers and sisters, St. James is giving us a glimpse of what life must be the followers of Christ, that is, to listen, to follow, be messengers of the gospel and be ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of Christ and His kingdom. Are we willing to take that risk? Are we willing to give all for Christ? Let us ask St. James the Great to give us courage and perseverance to follow the Lord, to say Yes to Him amidst difficulties, and lay down our lives through little and big sacrifices everyday. St. James the Great, pray for us. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.dailyscripture.net](http://www.dailyscripture.net)

<sup>5</sup> [www.catholic.org](http://www.catholic.org)