

- “*Then He sat down...*”
- With parchment or vellum as a writing material both expensive and rare when St. Mark wrote his Gospel, to record what seems like a rather extraneous observation that Jesus “sat down” seems unnecessary.
- But, for the Jews of Jesus’ time, a rabbi would sit when teaching something of special importance or solemnity.
- We see this most notably in Matthew at the Sermon on the Mount: “*Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him... ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit...’*”, etc. (Matthew 5:1)
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- So...what is Jesus teaching in today’s Gospel? Humility. That greatest of virtues, and from which all other virtues flow. Humility is the direct indication of God’s grace working within a person, while arrogance is opposed to grace.
- In fact, Proverbs tells us: “*Everyone who is arrogant is an abomination to the LORD...*” (Proverbs 16:5)

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- As you know, the Jews—and the apostles—mistakenly envisioned their Messiah would be an earthly military ruler—like King David or Solomon—and who would establish a kingdom, and defeat and eject foreign occupiers.
 - But the divine plan is something else entirely...not concerned with a little earthly kingdom, but rather the all-encompassing Heavenly one—which we enter by His words today “*If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.*” It is a kingdom reached only by service and humility.

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- In the Gospels Jesus is continuously stressing humility...both in His words and, even more so, in His actions.
 - In our reading today He calls us to be humble like children.
 - Now, while children were desired in Jesus time, they were certainly not fawned over as in our society today. They were virtually property...expected to be useful and obedient.

- If wayward, daughters could be beaten and locked up, and rebellious sons could even be executed. In Deuteronomy we read: *“If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son, who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they chastise him, will not give heed to them... Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones...”* (Dt 21:18-21)
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- But Jesus teaches humility, and He LIVES humility...and in humility is obedience to the Father’s will.
- As St. Paul tells us: *“...he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.”*
- And the end result of that absolute humble obedience? Paul continues: *“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

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- But both humility and obedience entail sacrifice—the sacrifice of foregoing our own corrupted will and desires in the recognition and preference to the eternal good, which is the will of the Father.
 - This is what Jesus showed us in spades...as in the Garden of Gethsemane when He pleaded: *“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will.”* (Matthew 26:39)

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- Our first reading from the Book of Wisdom is a favorite in which to find strength, for in it we are forewarned with the knowledge that the good will be persecuted by those who refuse the good... and being forewarned is being forearmed.
 - And that persecution is the suffering that manifests fidelity—the suffering of rejection, of disdain, of being thought of as a fool even...and, in worst cases, active physical persecution and attack.
 - Why? As we read: *“The wicked say: ‘Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us; he sets himself against our doings,*

reproaches us for transgressions of the law...With revilement and torture let us put the just one to the test that we may have proof of his gentleness and try his patience.’”

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- Who among us who seek to do the good have not experienced this?
- Young people are pressured by peers to do drugs and drink and to promiscuity, and ridiculed if they do not. *“With revilement...let us put the just one to the test...”*
- Well, young ones...that simply illustrates that it IS the stronger person who remains steadfast in his determination to do the good, rather than one who crumbles in the face of a little peer pressure.
- For adults: how many of you have told me of the detraction and disdain that you receive at the lab from non-believers? *“With revilement...let us put the just one to the test, that we may have proof of his gentleness and try his patience.”*
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- So, O Christian...will you collapse like a house of cards at the winds of challenge? Or will you rather stand steadfastly and courageously in your faith...like a rock defying the battering of the ocean of the world’s ways, which are often against the way of God?
- After all, the test of one’s character is whether or not he stands by his convictions. Our spiritual character is thus defined at whether we stand with the convictions of our Catholic faith...regardless of challenge. Each time we resist challenge, we strengthen ourselves for the next time.
- But resist such challenge, not arrogantly or harshly, but in the manner that St. James exhorts us today: *“...wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace.”*
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- So...to continue St. Paul: *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you...Do all things without*

grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life... ” (Philippians 2:8-16)

- [Moses said]: *“Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, as the LORD my God commanded me...Keep them and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding...you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul... ”*
(Deuteronomy 4:5-31)

Reading 1

[Wis 2:12, 17-20](#)

The wicked say:

Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us;
he sets himself against our doings,
reproaches us for transgressions of the law
and charges us with violations of our training.

Let us see whether his words be true;
let us find out what will happen to him.

For if the just one be the son of God, God will defend him
and deliver him from the hand of his foes.

With revilement and torture let us put the just one to the test
that we may have proof of his gentleness
and try his patience.

Let us condemn him to a shameful death;
for according to his own words, God will take care of him.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 54:3-4, 5, 6 and 8](#)

R. (6b)The Lord upholds my life.

O God, by your name save me,
and by your might defend my cause.

O God, hear my prayer;
hearken to the words of my mouth.

R. The Lord upholds my life.

For the haughty men have risen up against me,
the ruthless seek my life;
they set not God before their eyes.

R. The Lord upholds my life.

Behold, God is my helper;
the Lord sustains my life.

Freely will I offer you sacrifice;
I will praise your name, O LORD, for its goodness.

R. The Lord upholds my life.

Reading II [Jas 3:16-4:3](#)

Beloved:

Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist,
there is disorder and every foul practice.

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure,
then peaceable, gentle, compliant,
full of mercy and good fruits,
without inconstancy or insincerity.

And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace
for those who cultivate peace.

Where do the wars
and where do the conflicts among you come from?

Is it not from your passions
that make war within your members?

You covet but do not possess.

You kill and envy but you cannot obtain;
you fight and wage war.

You do not possess because you do not ask.

You ask but do not receive,
because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

Gospel [Mk 9:30-37](#)

Jesus and his disciples left from there and began a journey through Galilee,
but he did not wish anyone to know about it.

He was teaching his disciples and telling them,

“The Son of Man is to be handed over to men
and they will kill him,
and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise.”

But they did not understand the saying,
and they were afraid to question him.

They came to Capernaum and, once inside the house,
he began to ask them,

“What were you arguing about on the way?”

But they remained silent.

They had been discussing among themselves on the way
who was the greatest.

Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them,

“If anyone wishes to be first,
he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”

Taking a child, he placed it in the their midst,
and putting his arms around it, he said to them,

“Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me;
and whoever receives me,

receives not me but the One who sent me.”