



My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday of Great Lent, the Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt asks us to pray about what it means to truly devote ourselves to a God who would give his own life for us.

In his Epistle to the Hebrews, St. Paul writes of how our Lord demonstrated the perfection of God's love: *"But when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself*

without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!" (Hebrews 9:11-14) We can see from this short passage that our Lord's Passion is a great mystery: it is truly the greatest sacrifice one can make, but can we really imagine the humility and love He feels for us?

In the Gospel, our Lord is leading the way into Jerusalem, and prepares the Twelve for what they are to undergo: *"...the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again."* (Mark 10:33-34) After hearing this, James and John came to Him and said, *"Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you... Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."* (Mark 10:35; 37) Even with this prophecy, the Disciples still do not understand our Lord and His mission. James and John imagine they are marching to Jerusalem with the earthly Messiah, and before they arrive, they want to be sure they are rewarded.

Our Lord, however, wants to correct them in a spirit of love. *"You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"* James and John say that they are, but our Lord shows them what they lack: *"The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."* (Mark 10:38;40) The other Ten are upset, but they still do not understand that to be a follower of Christ is not to be rewarded, but to be humbled. When we learn of St. Mary of Egypt this Sunday, we can see someone who lived a life of sin, until she understood her unworthiness, and left the world to purify herself in the desert. She knew that to be a follower of Christ means we must deny ourselves, if we are to venerate His Holy Cross.

Our Lord tells the Disciples, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:42-45)

My brothers and sisters in Christ, in only two weeks we will offer our lamentations as we venerate the tomb of our Lord. As we continue to prepare ourselves for the events of Holy Week, we must prayerfully consider what it means to be a true follower of Christ. Are we concerned mostly with our desires and pleasures, or can we imagine what it must mean to give our lives for our friends? We might never be called to this final act of love, but we must humble ourselves to imagine what it means to be great, by serving others, before ourselves.

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