

FEAST OF ST. JAMES THE GREAT

Reflection

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Texts: II Cor 4:7-15; Matt 20: 20-28

Today we celebrate the feast of St. James the Great, or Santiago (his Spanish name). Legend has it that after his martyrdom in Jerusalem his remains were carried by boat to Galicia, northwestern Spain today. It is believed that he preached the Gospel that far away. His remains were buried in a church in what is now Santiago de Compostela, and eventually transferred to a cathedral there built in his honor. Pilgrims have walked the Camino de Santiago since the tenth century, a nearly 500 mile walk from the southwest French border with Spain. How many of you have done it? I have not, although I saw the movie called *The Way* starring Martin Sheen. I have some relatives and friends, who have walked it and they told me about it. A cousin of mine and his wife are doing it right now, from the shorter coastal Portugal route, he is posting photos on Facebook. They arrived at their destination yesterday and are there for the great feast honoring Santiago with a celebratory Mass in the Cathedral and parades all around the city.

It is no surprise that the Matthean gospel proclaimed to us today is about James and his brother John, the two sons of Zebedee. The story is in Mark's gospel, too, and there it is the sons who ask Jesus to give them the best places in God's upcoming reign. But in Matthew's gospel, he does not name her, it is their mother, Salome, who bows down before Jesus and asks for the best places for her sons. Well, I have some empathy for this mom. What mother does not want her sons to succeed?

I remember an occasion in my life when one of my brothers reluctantly came home to tell my mother and father that he was expelled from the University of Detroit, Jesuit High School, along with many of his Gesu buddies who were well into their junior year! (a long story as to the reasons why!) My mother went to the high school to plead her son's case with Principal, Father John Sullivan, S.J. She enhanced her Irish County Kerry accent a good bit, hoping it would help because Sullivan is a county Kerry name. But alas! To no avail! My brother and his Gesu buddies had to find other Catholic high schools! Thankfully, they did, and they all graduated, their parents gradually accepting the situation of their sons up to some teenage pranks.

My analogy between the two mothers, though, limps. My brother, and his pals, did have some restrictions placed on them: no desserts, no meeting for a week with your expelled pals to shoot hoops, and no meeting at Muirland Drugstore with girls. But in the case of James and John, it is far more serious, for this story in Matthew follows right after the third prediction of the passion that Jesus will soon undergo in Jerusalem. The brothers do not get it, and Jesus responds not to their mom, but *directly* to the brothers. The rest of the disciples do not get it either. They get angry at the brothers for seeking places above them! So, even after all the teachings and healings they have witnessed

in Galilee, no one gets it. Jesus' power is not like rulers who "Lord it over" their subjects. Jesus is Lord in *another* way.

St. Paul, after his conversion, did get it. In the verse just before our reading today, he writes: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ." In the many sufferings that Paul enumerates in the following verses, he derives his strength from the Light shining in his heart. He knows the troubles in his body and his mind are illuminated by the face of Christ, that he is held *in Christ* whose body and mind also endured suffering unto death and into the fullness of life. "Death is at work in us, but life is in you," he proclaims in verse 12. He emphasizes this message by saying that "everything indeed is for you so that the grace bestowed in abundance" can reach "more and more people."

We here in IHM Senior Living Community endure some mind and body pain, and many participating via livestreaming also endure suffering of many kinds, including moms – and dads, – worrying about their children and grandchildren in our troubled church and civic societies. The message today, it seems, is to let the light of God already shining in our hearts reach our faces. Yes, let the light of Christ show on our faces so that more and more people see it and are built up by it.

In southern Germany and Austria, people say "Gruss Gott," whether passing by on the streets and country roads or as a welcome into their homes. It means, "I greet God in you" or "May God bless you!" Maybe we should adopt this custom instead of saying "Hello."

Let us be eminently kind to all who care for us and render service to us and say, "May God bless you!" Let us not "Lord it over" *anyone*, except in the way of *Christ our Lord*, who creates us all *as equal*. We are connected completely in the body of Christ and let us have "more and more people" see the Life of God in us!

Gruss Gott!