

Homily for 25th Sunday Year B Fr. Michael Gathuku.

In today's Gospel reading Jesus brings the child to Centre stage and instructs his disciples: "Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me". Why did Jesus make a child a point of reference at this particular time?

It should be noted that before this invitation of welcoming little children, Jesus was instructing his disciples on what was going to happen to the son of Man, namely he would be made to suffer and put to death. This was the second prediction of his passion. The Gospel says, "but they did not understand", although they did not understand they were afraid to question him.

On their part, they had their own discussion, we know now that they were discussing and arguing on a different topic, namely who was the greatest among them? While Jesus was talking about his own struggles how he was going to suffer, his followers were obsessed by how to be important.



So, Jesus placed in front of them a small child, "a nobody" in the society, to bring home the point that greatness is not being first, not in having more, and not in being important in a worldly sense. Like the child greatness is in humility, simplicity and in total dependence on God.

Mark tells us how the disciple could not comprehend the future of powerlessness that Jesus maps out for himself. Jesus compared himself to the little child, a child who does not resort to power tactics when threatened or maltreated.

Jesus' protection is his father; his trust is placed in God who will ensure his protection. That trust makes him vulnerable like a little child, unless the disciples embrace that vulnerability, they will never understand the way of Jesus. On contrary they will always work to undo each other by competing.

When we constantly adopt a competitive mentality, the objective is often how we can surpass or exceed the other, how we can come out on top, winning is what matters, we define greatness as being number one, we work to outclass, outperform, and overtake each other.

The disciples of Jesus could not grasp Jesus' interpretation of greatness, because for Jesus' greatness is not in achievement but in the obstacles one has to overcome. Whereas success and achievement are earned, greatness is bestowed.

Greatness, true greatness is not determined by how successful we are by worldly standards, not how much influence we have, greatness is serving and relying on God, with humility to trust in God in all that we do, this can only happen if we trust like little children.