

25 OTB.18; Wis 2:12-20; James 3:16-4:3; Mark 9:30-37

Are you odd? This is a real question, especially, since we try to follow a 1st century teacher who made this puzzling statement:

“Whoever wishes to be first must be last of all and servant of all.”

It ran against the grain in his day as much as it does today.

Is it not a recipe for poor self-esteem, for being a perpetual doormat, for being exploited by everyone? **Maybe we need to look again**

“Dr. Charles Mayo with his father & brother, William, founded the world famous *Mayo Clinic* in Rochester, Minnesota. One time a group of European medical experts were guests of Dr. Mayo at his home. *According to their custom the guests placed their shoes outside their bedroom doors to be polished during the night.* Dr. Charles was the last to retire. As he went to his room he noticed the shoes. It was too late to wake up any servants. With a sigh he gathered up all the footwear, hauled them into the kitchen, and spent half the night” ... **polishing every pair!**

(25 OTB, Stories For All Seasons, G. Fuller)

Would any of us have done the same? Would we have shoe polish on our hands?

Is Dr. Charles Mayo the only “Odd One” among us?

And, then there is Jesus & the disciples who want to ... **“BE somebody!”**

“As they walked down the road in the gospel, they were arguing about which of them was *the greatest*. **Imagine the “credentials” they must have put forward!**

I’ve caught more fish than anyone in Galilee.” Or “When I was a tax collector,

I stole more in one year than any of you could make in a lifetime.”

Or “I can swim faster and lift more than any of you.”

It sounds like play-ground talk, but before we dismiss it too lightly, think of all the things we once thought were so important *in defining* who we are & why we are so special. Don’t raise your hands!, but there are lots of former great athletes here (shh! whose trophies may decorate Applebees or Ruby Tuesdays!), many with stacks of

excellent report cards, lots of ex-prom queens and ex-corporate executives, but it came and it went, and *none* of it was enough **to define us permanently**

and decisively as ... great.

If greatness is what we want, we will have to look somewhere else, to Jesus who has given us the only model ... *that really & eternally works*. He says that we find true greatness only very slowly, in the process of caring for people, each in our own way, each using our own unique gifts, and following wherever those gifts

... and those people's needs will take us.

Actually, Jesus did not set out to be crucified, but that's where our needs and his love led him. The new husband didn't set out to be care giver for a wife with Alzheimer's, but that's where love led him. The expectant mother didn't set out to

spend the rest of her life caring for a child with Down Syndrome, but that's where

love led her. Fr. Damien of Molokai didn't set out to get leprosy, but that's where love brought him." And you can probably name many, many more.

(*Clark, *Sunday Mornings* 2, 25 OTB)

True greatness is created very slowly, as our hearts are reshaped by love's demands. As we follow the long road where our gifts and others' needs lead us,

step by step we become like Jesus who walked the same road before us, and

step by step we sow the seeds of our resurrection by imitating him.

The Mission of the disciples, our Mission, remains the same.

Their Mission was not to perform mighty works, but to receive the little ones,

... the needy, the forgotten, and the rejected.

Their Mission was to share the love that had been given by Jesus.

Their Mission was a call to *humble service* embracing *the little people* as Jesus did.

Maybe there is something to *being selfless* after all....

By embracing that little child, Jesus was trying to teach the disciples an object lesson about greatness. He is saying to them and to us, "*If you want to walk on*

... secure ground in this world it helps to carry someone with you."

We need to carry someone or many someone's on our shoulders.

Opportunities to do this abound...

Not too long ago a group of *European theologians* once visited St. Mother Teresa in Kolkata/Calcutta. She said to them, "*You try to do what I am doing, then you will be able to enjoy what I am doing.*" She took them to one of her childcare centers and picked up a child who was playing in the mud and gave the child a kiss.

She waited for her guests to do the same. None of them did.

(Adapted: [esermos.com/Duncan, Ignoring Opportunity.o9](http://esermos.com/Duncan_Ignoring_Opportunity.o9))

What will you and I do today? Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King once observed

"Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love.

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Anyone here bring your heart, your soul with you today?

Anyone here have a little love to spare?

My friends we walk the same path as Jesus and the disciples did over 2,000 years ago. There is no short road to greatness or to resurrection, only the road that Jesus showed us. *At this Liturgy of Divine Greatness*, let us realize that what Jesus did with the disciples, he wants to do with us. He wants to show us a better way to live. He wants to show us how noble and fulfilling it is to Serve others above ourselves.

Yes, the world will think us ODD,

... but let us be bold and daring and live the GREAT life of loving service.

After all, a little shoe polish is good for us!