

**Kingdom Involves Suffering**     St. James, apostle     Friday, July 25, 2014     8:15 AM  
**2 Cor 4:7-15; Mt 20:20-28**     (He is asking everyone who comes to the Eucharist to be a martyr of some kind.)

Today we have a conflict in understanding. The apostles and James' mother have this idea of **the kingdom**, which Jesus is always talking about, but **they think of it in earthly terms**. It's about sitting. It's about presiding. It's about ruling. It's about controlling. That's the way earthly kingdoms are. Jesus says, no, it's something totally different. **"You don't know what you are asking for."**

The kingdom Jesus is talking about is the power of God alive in human life, only it comes by way of **tremendous suffering**. Why is this? Apparently people don't really come to be willing to receive the kingdom of God until they are flat on their face, until the earthly props have been knocked out from under them, until they run out of other options, then finally God or God's way becomes a live option, something they think about really choosing. **But as long as there is another way out, they will take another way out.**

So Jesus says, **"Can you really drink from the chalice I shall drink from?"** And of course they claim they can. But he says, "Well, you shall," in a way prophesying their martyrdom. But this is the same words **in our Eucharist. Jesus says, "Take and drink; this is the chalice of my blood."** He is asking everyone who comes to the Eucharist to be a **martyr of some kind**. Yes, God promises great glory and honor, but also and first suffering. How this message has been buffered, protected, cushioned from people I don't know, but it has been. This gospel makes it very clear and St. Paul did too in the first reading. St. Paul was very clear about this. **There's a lot of suffering; it's part of life. And we have to learn how to suffer in a godly way.** Avoiding suffering is a losing proposition. We have to learn how to live as Jesus lived. That involves the cup of suffering, the chalice of suffering.

And **that involves learning how to serve**, and not only learning how to serve, but **becoming willing to serve**. That's the change. It's not as if we have to learn some strategy. It's that we have to become willing and desirous of serving. And if there is any good in pride it's that, that it might **motivate us to be** the first in the kingdom, **the greatest slave and servant of all**. It doesn't look like an earthly kingdom because it isn't.