

Ambition and Rivalry St. James, Apostle Wednesday, July 25, 2018 8:15 AM 2
Cor 4:7-15; **Mt 20:20-28** (Try to include the most people in the ambit of your service and work. And that is an ambition worth striving for.)

“But it shall not be so among you.”

This particular gospel reading contains one of the essential characteristics of the Christian religion in contrast to other religions, all of which have some good in them. Christianity is unique because in Christianity there is the Word of God becoming incarnate. **The Incarnate Word of God has great concern for human life as it is, its needs and necessities.**

Now it is very typical of the so-called Eastern kind of religion to deflect or suppress the whole idea of ambition, worldly ambition. This is about worldly ambition. James and John and their mother want them to get ahead, and the other disciples are indignant. This is about rivalry, **ambition and rivalry, constant realities in our life**, constant qualities in our business world, in our government world, in our academic world, in everything—ambition and rivalry.

Jesus does not say do not be ambitious. He says, “Among you it must not be as it is in the world where those who have importance lord it over others.” But if you want to be ambitious, that’s okay. If you want to rival, that’s okay, but this is the way to do it: **try to be the greatest servant, try to serve the highest good. Try to include the most people in the ambit of your service and work. And that is an ambition worth striving for.** Indeed it is the very ambition he embodied himself, as he says, “The Son of Man”—referring to himself; that’s simply a grammatical construct; that’s a way of talking about himself in the third person—**“the Son of Man did not come to be served.”** He could have said, “I did not come to be served. The Word of God did not come to be served”—**“but to serve and give his life as a ransom.”**

Now there is a direct relationship between this and the feast we just had: St. Benedict. You will remember that Benedict had this brilliant idea to **balance *ora and labora*, prayer and**

work. That is directly related to this because if your ambition is to be a servant, **servants have to do something, so work is important.** We see the result of this is during the high Middle Ages Benedictine monasteries were bakeries, breweries, wineries, pharmacies, hostels, hospices, shelters for thousands of people. Why? Because that was the produce of their *labora*, their work. Why? Because they wanted to serve. **They wanted to do something with their life. It's also related to the idea of vocation.**

Now when we look to the **East where monasticism came from, we never see any of this fruit.** We don't see any bread, beer, wine, medicine, or anything. There are no libraries or bookstores, nothing. Why? Because they never got to the idea that ambition could be good, that work is actually good for the human person, that **we are actually put on earth to do something.**