

# 25<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## St. Mark 9:30-37

Why do bad things happen to good people? Why is it that the harder we try to do what is right and good the greater the difficulties and the forces that prevail against us? Last week in the letter from St. James, he wrote that faith without good works is dead (see *Jam.* 2:17). So, in persevering in our faith we also persevere in our good works, trying to make manifest our love of God by our love of others. But it seems to be a “Catch-22” situation; the more good we try to do the more suffering we seem to bear, and the less good we do the more we fail in our duty to God and to the Church. When we do what is right we are hardly celebrated, in fact, the best we usually get is someone telling us, “well, what do you expect—it’s what you are supposed to do anyway.” But when we do wrong there is no shortage of people who are very eager to dissect and roast us. The author of the book of Wisdom wrote that the wicked fight against the good man and his good works, “since he annoys us and opposes our way of life” (*Wis.* 2:12).

So what can I do? I can do either as St. James warns against in his epistle; I can make wars but lose every battle, I can be envious and jealous but still be without, I can act on my unguided emotions and feelings but still be unfulfilled. Or I can do as Our Lord said in the Gospel: I can make myself last of all but which will make me first of all in the kingdom of heaven, I can make myself a servant but which by God’s grace will make me my own master, I can submit myself to the abuse and the hypocrisy and the lies of others but know that I will rise with Our Lord and gain victory over the world because I will find peace for myself in the home of God for ever.

Someone once said to me, the greater the good, the greater the evil. The more I persevere in holiness and fidelity the greater the forces that will rage

against me to undermine and overwhelm my efforts. And it makes sense, because why would Satan seek to destroy those who do his will, or even those who are apathetic—those who do not care one way or the other? Instead he would seek to destroy all that stands against him, for the brighter the light the less the darkness.

I don't say that do what is right against what is popular is easy, because it is not. In fact it is a struggle and at times it can seem fruitless. It takes courage, and courage is not the same thing as bravery. Courage is not the absence of fear but the grace to rise above it, to surrender to Christ and to persevere even if it means death. The real test of faith and of character is not what we do when people are around, but what we do when there is no one around to see.