

On Friday morning I engaged
in an invigorating conversation Referendum 74.
Towards the end of our discussion,
one of my colleagues
offered a more general reflection
on the tenor of this year's election.

She reflected:

Are candidates really interested
in representing their districts?

Are candidates genuinely looking
to advance the common good?

It certainly has felt as if the candidates
are far more concerned about themselves
rather than those they have chosen to represent –
asserting unfounded claims,
making false promises
and flinging personal attacks
so as to gain reelection.

I don't know about you,
it all just gets so tiring
and all the rhetoric sounds antithetical
to what a nation – originally founded under God –
ought to aspire to.

And what ought we aspire to?

Living life with Christ at the center ...
not my will be done,
but your will be done.

For the last several weeks,
Jesus has methodically laid out his vision
for the Kingdom.

Today – again –
Jesus tells the ambitious Twelve,
if they want to be considered great,
they must be servants and slaves of all.

Think about it,
if Jesus were running for office,
do you ever wonder how a good speechwriter,
could doctor his words enough
to attract even one vote? –
Or one disciple!

The disciples have no clue
what it actually means to follow Jesus.

And, James and John,
two of the first disciples chosen to follow Jesus,
three years into Jesus' mission,
still lack an understanding
of what it all means
to be on the "way" with Jesus.

As Jesus walked ahead,
the disciples fall back discussing

who will be the greatest;
who will be first;
who will sit at his right and left in the Kingdom.

Yet, who can blame them for talking like this?

When faced with the hard, cold, fearful reality
of being handed over, condemned,
spat upon and put to death,
wouldn't you be afraid?

Are we no different?

Wouldn't you want some guarantee
that all will work out well?

When faced with some of the realities
we must face in our lives –
sudden illness,
loss of a career,
the unexpected end to a marriage,
would we not ask similar questions
to assuage our anxieties?

My friends,
so central to understanding Mark's message
is to understand the kind of Messiah Jesus is
and the kind of discipleship
that Christ call us to.

In the heart of his gospel,
Mark repeatedly insists that
Jesus challenged his disciple's misapprehension
with clear instruction,
stressing self-sacrificial service
in His name and for the gospel's sake.

Jesus turns upside down
the "popular" notion of position
that the disciples are vying.

And, instead calls the disciples
to a servant leadership.

1. Whoever wishes to be great among you
will be your servant.
2. Whoever wishes to be first among you
will be the slave of all.
3. The Son of Man came not to be served,
but to serve and to give his life away.

Certainly, running on this platform
would lower anyone's popularity rating.

Yet, running on this platform
requires great faith.

Thankfully, grace is always available
Jesus knows this way well.

"For we do have a high priest
who is to sympathize with our weakness,
and one who has similarly been tested in every way.

So let us confidently approach the throne of grace
to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help."

Jesus accompanies us with love
because he, himself, knew our humanity
and the suffering that often comes with it.

He showed us the “way” and walks with us.
Jesus goes with us all the way to the cross,
to our death and to the new life he has promised.

Today the Church celebrates
World Mission Sunday.

Who better
than the missionaries of today’s Church
to remember today.

These men and women
have chosen a way of life
that may put them on the front lines,
but who actively choose to serve,
to walk in the way of the Lord.

On this World Mission Sunday,
the RCC beatified
2 missionaries to the New World:

St. Marianne Cope,
who tirelessly labored
with lepers in Hawaii;

St. Kateri Tekakwitha,
known as Lily of the Mohawks.

Although not beatified,
a personal hero of mine,
Ritchie Fernando, a young Filipino Jesuit,
who taught children maimed by landmines.

One day he fell on a grenade
to shield his students from a disturbed man
who entered his classroom.
Years before he died, he reflected:

I wish, when I die, people remember

not how great, powerful, or talented I was,
but that I served and spoke for the truth,
I gave witness to what is right,
I was sincere in all my works and actions,
in other words,
I loved and I followed Christ."

My friends,
to be disciples we have to hear Jesus' words
about where real greatness lies.

A message that is not easily heard.

Yet, we are all called,
no matter who we are,
to live our Christian faith fully –
sharing it and witnessing to it
in our daily lives.