



Mark 9:30-37

30 After leaving the mountain Jesus and his disciples made their way through Galilee; and he did not want anyone to know, **31** because he was instructing his disciples; he was telling them, 'The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men; they will put him to death; and three days after he has been put to death he will rise again.' **32** But they did not understand what he said and were afraid to ask him. **33** They came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' **34** They said nothing because they had been arguing which of them was the greatest. **35** So he sat down, called the Twelve to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all.' **36** He then took a little child, set him in front of them, put his arms round him, and said to them, **37** 'Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

Other readings: Wisdom 2:12,17-20 Psalm 53 (54) James 3:16-4:3

The second half of the Gospel of Mark is dominated by the journey towards Jerusalem, the place of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Since this gospel is comparatively short, the tension of this journey is more evident than in the other gospels, as Jesus draws his reluctant and confused disciples to face the mystery of his cross.

For the second time Jesus announces his coming death. He will be handed over and put to death. Three days after he will rise again. While Peter had reacted strongly to similar words of Jesus in the previous chapter, here there is simply bewilderment.

The following verses underline that the disciples are not yet ready to face up to what Jesus has said. Their preoccupation is still with status and their relative positions in Jesus' company. Mark does not hesitate to present the disciples as having much to learn, both about the conditions for following Jesus and about the prospect of his martyrdom.

Jesus' answer is to call them to accept the position of the least, and he illustrates this by placing a child before them.

Our first reading, from the Book of Wisdom, speaks of the plots of the godless against the virtuous man. It is not surprising that Christians used such texts to reflect on what happened to Jesus. So should we.

How difficult is it to accept a crucified Messiah?

Do I, like the disciples, seek to avoid awkward truths which are presented to me?

We pray for those who face persecution and violence because of their beliefs.

We pray for the gift of true humility and appropriate ambition.