

The Servant of All

Jesus and the disciples were returning to Capernaum. Darkening rain clouds in the angry sky matched their dark moods. The disciples had fallen behind the faster-paced Jesus, walking and talking in groups of two or three. Up ahead, Jesus seemed cloaked in disappointment as he walked alone.

A little while earlier the disciples heard Jesus tell them the disturbing words:

“The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men who will put him to death; three days after his death he will rise.”

This pronouncement launched a flurry of exasperating questions which served to separate them from Jesus. The disciples failed to understand what Jesus told them, and seeing his exasperation with them, they fell behind, clumping together in little discussion groups. No one wanted to ask Jesus what he really meant by such improbable words. They were all going to be part of the new kingdom.

Jesus had momentarily given up. Things hadn't been going well. He thought about his death, the death he had just foretold. He thought about how he would have to let them take him from this world. He would no longer walk in these hills and enjoy the familiar countryside.

Nearing Capernaum he overheard some of the disciples arguing about what their positions would be in the kingdom to come. Such dreams were understandable. People were born into their station in life and there was almost no chance to improve on it. A fisherman would always be a fisherman. The poor, shepherds and slaves remained in their status. The disciples thought that Jesus was offering them a new order, a new kingdom. They would no longer be fishermen, they would be the new aristocracy.

Back in Peter's house Jesus said to them: “What were you discussing on the way home?”

No one answered because they knew that he must have heard them. Jesus sat down and motioned for them to join him.

One of Peter's young nephews, a boy about four



years of age, suddenly burst into the room. He stopped, surprised at all the strangers. Then he recognized Jesus and came up to him. Jesus hugged the boy who reached up to explore Jesus' beard. Gently taking the boy's hand, Jesus said to his disciples: “If anyone of you wishes to rank first, he must remain the last one of all and be the servant of all.”

Then looking at the young boy, Jesus continued: “Whoever welcomes a child such as this for my sake, welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me welcomes, not me, but him who sent me.”

Some of the disciples smiled in agreement as they began to understand Jesus' example. Children were the least of society, powerless, dependent on others and without rank.

To be first the disciples would have to remain last, even after children. They would have to be the servants of all.



Jesus seems to be describing Mother Teresa! She was the servant of all. She was the servant of the lowest and least. Because of that she was honored and exalted by an applauding world.