

# Are You First?

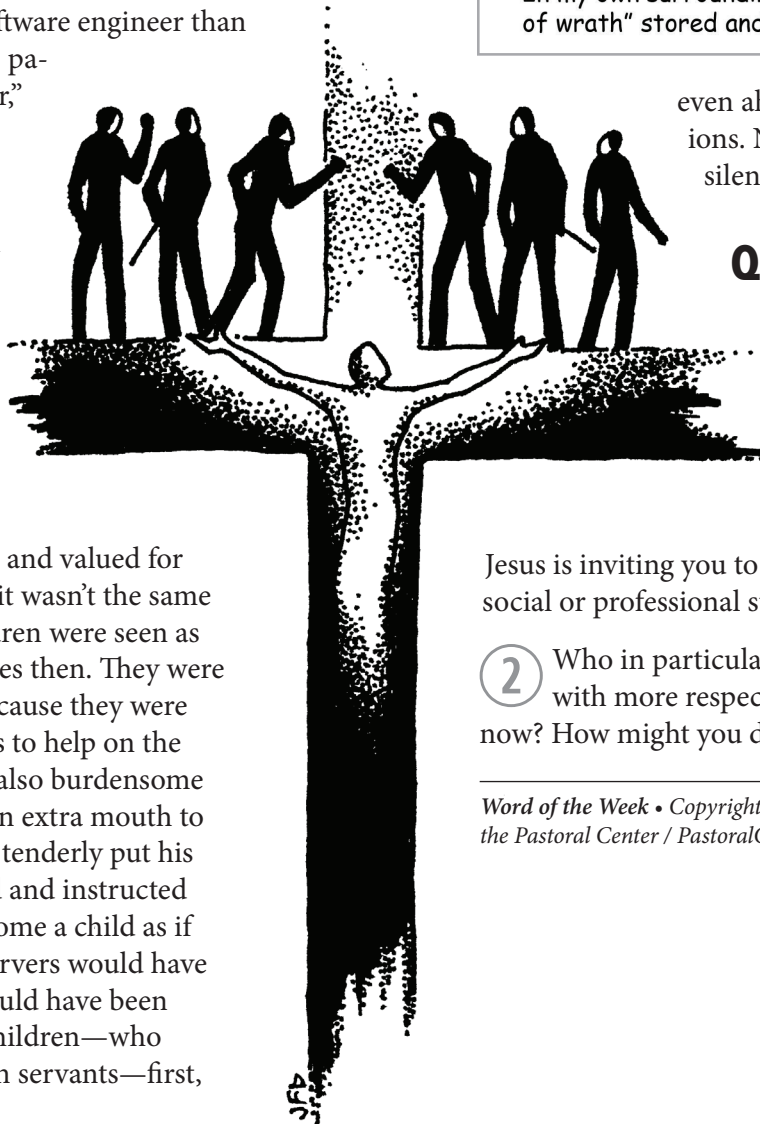
*This Week's Readings at Mass*

- ▶ Wisdom 2:12, 17-20 - The wicked speak
- ▶ James 3:16-4:3 - True wisdom and worldly desires
- ▶ Mark 9:30-37 - Who is the greatest?

At times, the twelve apostles displayed great faith; some left their jobs immediately to follow Jesus, and at other times they healed the sick, cast out demons, and preached with the same power as Jesus. However, in Mark's Gospel today, Jesus catches them arguing about who was the greatest.

We may think we are above that kind of squabbling, but how often do we make comparisons to others in our own lives? It may take the form of thinking to ourselves "I'm a better, faster, and more productive software engineer than him" or "I'm a more patient parent than her," or even "My child is smarter, kinder, or more talented than hers." It is then that we need to remember Jesus' counter-cultural lesson to the disciples.

In our society, children are honored, cherished, and valued for their own sake, but it wasn't the same in Jesus' time. Children were seen as little more than slaves then. They were primarily valued because they were another set of hands to help on the farm but they were also burdensome because they were an extra mouth to feed. So when Jesus tenderly put his arms around a child and instructed the apostles to welcome a child as if it was him, the observers would have been shocked. It would have been unheard of to put children—who were little more than servants—first,



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"The wicked say: Let us beset the just one... let us put the just one to the test."

**Sheepish Question:**  
In my own surroundings, where ARE the "grapes of wrath" stored and how can I avoid them?

even ahead of Jesus' closest companions. No wonder the apostles were silenced.

## Questions of the Week

- 1 What form does social comparison take in your personal and professional circles? Are there particular ways Jesus is inviting you to let go of concerns about your social or professional standing? How so?
- 2 Who in particular is Jesus asking you to receive with more respect and openness in your life now? How might you do that?

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