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**...THE SON OF MAN CAMETO GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY. –
Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM**

link video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izWBfdJvHDQ>

Mark 10, 35-45:35

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

There is nothing for it: the disciples are full of ambition and vanity which makes them blind and deaf even if they have ears, but they do not listen, they have eyes but do not see. After the second clear announcement of Jesus' passion an argument broke out between his disciples to know who was the greatest and Jesus had called them back saying “If you want to be the first, be the last of all and serve all.” Now there is the third and final announcement of the passion and Jesus could not be clearer: "In Jerusalem I will be killed". Let's see the reaction of the disciples, it is in Mark's gospel chapter 10,35-47

“James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him..” if they came up to him it means that they were at a distance, they are with him but they do not follow him. They are an old acquaintance. They are two fanatic, violent and authoritarian disciples, that Jesus called “sons of thunder”, in Aramaic “boanerges” giving the sense of thunder for their characters. *“..the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher....”* They call him teacher, but in reality they do not follow him, and they do not learn *“Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.”* And he said to them, *“What do you want me to do for you?”* and here is the absurd request after Jesus had said clearly that at Jerusalem he would be killed *And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”* It is the image of the king in the royal court where he has his first ministers, one on the right and one on the left. They want the places of honour, they have not understood that Jesus does not grant places of honour.

In fact *“Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink,...”* the cup is the image of fate in the gospel, the image of Jesus' passion in Gethsemane, where he will say *“... take away this cup from me:”* (Mark 14,36) *Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized..”* here we often find the verb "to baptize" that does not

have the liturgical sense, but the original meaning of being immersed, of being overwhelmed, “..with the baptism with which I am baptized?” Jesus speaks of this immersion that overwhelms him, and them with presumption “....they said to him, “We are able.” Really? Then, at the end of the Gospel, the evangelist will write that “then all of them fled”.

“And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink,...” one day they also will encounter martyrdom and the passion “..and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, but...” Jesus makes it clear to them, “.. to sit at my right hand or at my left...” and here there is a misunderstanding, they thought of the places of honour, Jesus thinks of the cross “..is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” Who are those for whom it was prepared? Those who at the moment of the trial will be able to follow Jesus carrying his cross but there will be no disciple.

The disciples request provokes indignation of the others, not because they are scandalized, but because everyone had this ambition. “And when the ten...” the evangelist emphasizes that the number is ten because it refers to the great earthquake that led to the end of Israel when at the death of Solomon, because of the arrogance of the son and of the twelve tribes, ten left him. Then arrived Syria to conquest Israel. So it is the schism caused by the ambition that can lead to the ruin of the community “And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John.” I repeat they were indignant because they had the same ambition.

“And Jesus called them to him...” again the evangelist underlines the distance, they are not near Jesus “You know that those who are considered...” Jesus does not say that they are rulers, but that they consider themselves so. “.. rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them,” so Jesus has a fully negative image of those in power “..their great ones exercise authority over them.” literally they lord it, impose their authority. And then Jesus asks the community three times that there is no imitation of the system of power that exists in society “But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,..” the evangelist uses the word “diaconos” meaning he who freely, and voluntarily for love puts himself at the service of others, “..whoever would be first..” meaning nearest to Jesus “.. must be slave of all.” The slave was the lowest level in the society.

And here is Jesus’ conclusion “.. even the Son of Man..” who is Jesus manifested in the divine condition “...came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” The ransom was the price that was paid to free someone from slavery and this is the Jesus’ work, the God with us, to put his life to service. Therefore those who want to be close to Jesus cannot pretend to be served, but must serve him generously and freely.