

THE SON OF MAN IS GOING TO BE DELIVERED.....IF ANYONE WOULD BE FIRST, HE MUST BE LAST OF ALL AND SERVANT TO ALL.

Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

Mark 9, 30-37

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.

And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

Jesus announces his death to his disciples three times and each time it is an occasion of conflict and misunderstanding, as we see in this second announcement in the Mark's gospel chapter 9, 30-37. "*They went on from there and passed through Galilee And he did not want anyone to know..*" they had the wrong idea of the Messiah, they thought that he went to Jerusalem to conquest the power. So Jesus did not want people to know of their wrong idea of him.

"*..he was teaching..*" it is the second time that Jesus teaches about his death, "*.. teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man..."*" the Son of man is the man who has the divine condition, that is man with the Spirit who reaches the fullness of his humanity. "*..is going to be delivered into the hands of men,*" in contrast to the Son of man, a man with fullness, they are men, those who do not have the Spirit, who do not reach the maturity of life, and kill him, because they do not adhere to God's plan for humanity.

"*And when he is killed, after three days...*" The three means completion, final "*..he will rise.*" Jesus had spoken very clearly, he had not spoken in parables, but the reaction "*...they did not understand the saying...*" and not only "*..and were afraid to ask him.*" It's not that they did not understand him, they understood well, but they did not want Jesus to explain what they really understood, that Jesus will go to Jerusalem to the disaster. And here again the scolding that Jesus had already done to the disciples that had ears, but didn't understand.

"*And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house...*" Jesus' house "*..he asked them,..*" they are afraid to ask him, but Jesus asks them "*What were you discussing on the way?*" Here, when the evangelist Mark puts the indication of a way, it refers to the parable of the seed sown on hard

ground and eaten by the birds, that are the image of Satan and Satan is power. Those who harbour feelings of ambition over others and success, are refractory to the word of the Lord.

“But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.” They continue with this idea of hierarchy, of rank, of superiority and do not understand Jesus’ message. So Jesus *“..sat down..”* in sitting down he takes on the position of the Teacher, *“.. and called the twelve.”* This is strange it is a typical small Palestinian house, why does he have to call them? Because they are distant, yes, they are physically close, but they are far away, they accompany him, but they do not actually follow him. *“And he said to them, “If anyone..”* here the evangelist constructs the expression that Jesus made of the cross: if someone wants to come after me, then it follows on *“...would be first..”* They had argued amongst themselves as to who was the greatest. In Jesus’ community there is no one the greatest, but there can be a first, that is one nearest to him, this yes, *“.. he must be last of all..”* here if one wants to be the first, nearest Jesus *“..he must be last of all and servant of all.”* Here the evangelist uses the Greek term "diaconos" (deacon) meaning to serve; while servant he is obliged to serve, deacon is the one who freely and voluntarily for love, puts himself at the service of others.

“And he took a child..” while the twelve he had to call for, here Jesus takes someone near to him. The term used by the evangelist indicates a child, one who is the last in society in terms of age and importance. One that for his age and last position is at the service of all *“.. and put him in the midst of them,”* Jesus’ place is in the middle. So Jesus puts himself in the middle of the person he serves, he identifies himself with him *“..and taking him in his arms,..”* full identification, *“..he said to them, “Whoever receives one such child in my name..”* that is, as if it were me, *“.. receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”* Jesus assures that the exercise of voluntarily service is that which identifies the individual with Jesus and it is the acceptance of the last of society that allows the continuous presence of the Father within the community.