



Hebrews 5:1-10; Mark 10:35-45
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We are a little over two weeks away from election day, November 5. From local officers to state representatives to the President of the US, many leadership roles will be decided soon.

As engaged and responsible citizens we educate ourselves on the issues and the candidates running for office. We research the issues deeper than just following soundbites and slogans.

Public office is a leadership position. Knowing what they plan to do is important to know, obviously. The reasons someone wants to lead deserve our attention as well. We listen to what the candidates have to say about why they've chosen to run and what they plan to do once elected. The observation of the candidates' moral character will also give us a clue on how they will use the power that comes with their position.

As people of faith, engaging in the political process is both a privilege and a responsibility. Our active participation holds the power to potentially build a better society where everyone's voice is heard, everyone's dignity is valued, every vote is protected, and people's contributions are appreciated.

In today's gospel, Jesus describes his leadership style. Mark (10:45) observes: Jesus "came not to be served, but to serve." He redefines greatness and values those society otherwise downplays.

We Christians, who follow Jesus' Way, take on that attitude and philosophy in all aspects of life together: from politics to family, from business to education, from sports to art. Jesus gives his life for the good of others. Christian leadership prioritizes the public good rather than personal gain. Those admired as strongmen become tyrants and lord it over people.

The Letter to the Hebrews, echoing Paul's Letter to the Philippians,¹ emphasizes Jesus' leadership style. It was through suffering that he learned the meaning of life.

During his life on earth, Jesus is said to have offered "prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears."²

I can see the spiritual struggle and the emotional torment that Jesus went through. We have a sense of that when we read of his temptations in the desert and throughout his life; when he faced challenges by the Scribes and the Pharisees; when he healed diseases and brought the dead back to life; when he encountered the hypocrisy, abuses, and discrimination of patriarchy toward women and children; when he overturned social hierarchies and privileges; and, finally, when his love for life and his solidarity with those who suffer brought him to his knees, alone in prayer, on a daily basis, and in difficult and tense moments, like in Gethsemane and on the cross.

Compassion can bring on much pain, and Jesus surrendered to deep love. Because he was obedient to God and made himself vulnerable to the pain of love, God listened and responded to his prayer. His challenges were not removed but he received the grace to resist the temptation to limit, hide, or withdraw his love.

¹ Philippians 2:5-11

² The Jerusalem Bible has offered prayers and supplications "aloud and in silent tears."

In the presence of difficult people, Jesus remained in integrity and chose to love. He demonstrated a commitment to God who granted him boldness, patience, endurance, and persistence.

Jesus remained faithful and loving especially when facing the cruelty of evil. He practiced what he preached: love God and love your neighbor. There is no love of God if the love of neighbor is missing, and vice versa. And the love of self is displayed in the measure you open to God and neighbor. Growth in self-love is a product of one's growth in trusting of God.

My prayers and silent tears go for those who suffer in war zones, the wounded, the dead, the misplaced, the orphaned. For land and animals brutalized. For destroyed homes, business, schools, and hospitals, museums and community centers.

My prayers and silent tears go for those who mourn, for those who know no peace, for those crying day and night not knowing what to feed their children, for the sexually abused, and the abused of all kinds by insane hearts and minds. For those whose voice is stolen by corrupt politicians and leaders. For those who live in fear and long for justice. For the victims of hate crimes. For those who live with discrimination. For those who despair, the hopeless, and those who take their own life.

What do you pray for? Whom are your silent tears for? What makes you angry? Do you rebel, fight back, freeze up, fall back?

Will you become obedient to God in love and learn to serve putting others ahead of your own self-interests? Will you bring hope and care, will you embrace and shelter, will you advocate and protect the powerless, the persecuted, the demonized?

Will our Church reach out as Jesus did with compassion and healing? Will we be a sign of hope and a means of grace?

May it be so, and may the Good Lord give us the boldness necessary to love. Amen.