

8th Wednesday in Ordinary Time
March 2, 2011
Fr. Joe Bambenek
St. Patrick's Church, Washington DC

Sirach 36:1, 4-5a, 10-17

Psalm 79

Mark 10:32-45

In today's gospel reading, we see the great contrast between the exercise of power according to the world, and according to Jesus. It is a particularly poignant message for those of us here at Mass today: with most of us being on our lunch breaks at a church located geographically between the two greatest foci of governmental power in the capital city of the most powerful country in the history of the world. Jesus makes clear what kind of leaders He wants us, as Christians, to be in our positions of leadership and power. We are to serve the people we lead. We are to lay down our lives for them. We are to forgive. It is for that reason that our great leader came to Earth, to walk among us, and ultimately to die for us.

Since most of you who come here regularly probably don't recognize me, I should perhaps explain who I am and why I am here. My name is Fr. Joe Bambenek. I was ordained as a priest of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis last May, and I am here today to celebrate a post-ordination Mass of Thanksgiving. A decade ago, I could be found in the pews of St. Patrick's for daily Mass on an almost weekly basis as I came to town to negotiate, of all things, rules regarding power: the use of the electric power system. During that time I was seriously wrestling with the call from God to the priesthood that kept getting stronger. Since I know you must get back to work soon, I will spare you the details of how I got from the pews to the pulpit. Instead let me share two quick things: first, I have returned to say thank you to the parish for your faithful stewardship of the sacraments that allowed me to be spiritually nourished as God was trying to speak to me; and to Monsignor for your leadership in continuing the great tradition of St. Patrick's. And second, I hope that in some way my presence here today serves as a witness of the peace and joy that is possible, yet might seem unthinkable at times, when we put aside our own agendas, and instead, seek to follow God's plan for our lives and be servant leaders. Especially if God is calling you in some way today or more generally at this time in your life, while the road of following Him may not always be easy, I am here to say that the trip to Jerusalem with Jesus is worth the costs it entails. That it has great rewards even in this life and certainly in the next.

As we soon receive Jesus in the Eucharist, and then leave St. Patrick's carrying Him inside of us, let us return to our duties exercising the power with which we have been entrusted in the way that Jesus would exercise it. Let us set aside temptations to ego-driven quests for worldly power and glory, and instead, strive to be instruments of service and forgiveness in our exercise of whatever power we have so that we may attain true glory for eternity and lead those we serve with us.