



In this week's Gospel, Jesus teaches his Apostles what it really means to be great:

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." He replied, "What do you wish (me) to do for you?" They answered him, "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" They said to him, "We can." 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 or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared." When the ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John. Jesus summoned them and said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:35–45, NAB)

Here are a few principles we can deduce from this profound teaching of our Lord:

- 1) The disciples were not to seek personal aggrandizement; rather, true greatness is measured by humble, sacrificial, service to others – being the servant and "slave of all." St. Paul understood Jesus' lesson: "For we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Jesus." (2 Corinthians 4:5)
- 2) Where there is selfish ambition, self-aggrandizement, there is division. Notice, the other ten Apostles were "indignant at James and John" for seeking to be exalted above them.
- 3) Where there is an attitude of humble service among people there is harmony. Jesus reunited his Apostles by gathering them and telling them to put aside contentious desires to appear superior and do the exact opposite – humbly treat others as your superiors and commit yourself to being a servant whose only desire is to edify and enrich the lives of others.

Wherever these principles are embraced there is harmony, unity, joy, compassion, encouragement, love. St. Paul, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit summarizes beautifully Jesus' teaching:

"If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, **humbly regard others as more important than yourselves**, each looking out not for his own interests, but (also) everyone for those of others. Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth," (Philippians 2:1–10, NAB).

As we bend our knees today at the name of Jesus, may we be filled with his Spirit and may our attitudes toward one another be ever more like his – he did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many – this is the only road to true greatness.

Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples



St John Capistrano

Born: June 24, 1386

Died: October 23, 1456

Patron: Military chaplains, judges, jurists, and lawyers

Canonized: October 16, 1690 by Pope Alexander VIII

Imagine living in a country where deadly plague and civil wars have decimated the population and continued for years to threaten the living. Envision, too, suffering the confusion of a church in which two and sometimes three men claimed to be pope. Finally, pretend having responsibility for a religious order bitterly divided into opposing camps.

These troubled circumstances provide a backdrop for the life of St. John of Capistrano and give us some perspective on his actions. John studied law at Perugia, Italy, where he married the daughter of a leading citizen and, in 1412 at the age of 26, John became the governor.

In 1416, while in jail as a political prisoner, he experienced a conversion and decided to become a religious. Somehow, he got his wife to release him. He paraded through Perugia seated backward on a donkey wearing a paper hat that listed all his sins. Having humiliated himself in this bizarre repentance, he applied to the Franciscans of the Strict Observance and was accepted.

Immediately, the order put John on the fast track. Ordained in 1420, the Observants commissioned him to preach all over the Italian boot. With his remarkable gift for speaking, he revived the hope of thousands whose faith had eroded in the chaotic fourteenth century. He preached repentance to laity and clergy alike.

As a Franciscan friar, John embraced a life of extreme poverty, demonstrating his devotion through physical discipline and spiritual practices. His lifestyle as a friar was marked by rigorous self-denial. John was known to walk barefoot on rough roads, sleep only three to four hours a night and wear coarse clothing. These practices reflected his deep commitment to the Franciscan ideals of poverty, simplicity, and his desire to emulate the suffering of Christ.

John's ability to connect with people and inspire faith made him a crucial figure in reviving religious devotion across central Europe. John traveled extensively with twelve Franciscan brethren, being received in various countries as "angels of God".

John's expertise in law, combined with his religious zeal, made him a formidable force in addressing various challenges within the Church. He played a crucial role in suppressing heretical movements and in resolving conflicts within the Franciscan Order itself.

In the latter part of his life, John of Capistrano took on an unexpected role as a military leader. When the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople in 1453, threatening to advance further into Europe, John was commissioned to preach a crusade for the defense of Christian territories. Initially focusing his efforts in Hungary, John joined forces with the great general John Hunyadi. Together, they led an army to Belgrade, where they achieved a decisive victory against the Ottoman forces, lifting the siege of the city. Saint John of Capistrano's life ended shortly after the Battle of Belgrade. Exhausted by his superhuman efforts and weakened by the rigors of the campaign, he fell prey to an infection and died.

Reflection: St John was not one to sit around. He was a political prisoner, lawyer, governor, Franciscan monk, preacher and a military leader. His deep Christian optimism drove him to battle problems at all levels with the confidence engendered by a deep faith in Christ. His legacy continues to inspire believers today, reminding us of the potential for personal transformation and the impact an individual can have when driven by faith and conviction.