

Many of you remember Muhammed Ali who become World Heavy Weight Boxing Champion in 1964. He reclaimed his title 2 times during the 1970's. He used to say, 'I'm the greatest, I'm the greatest.' I enjoyed his bombast.

In today's Gospel Jesus speaks plainly to His disciples, telling them about His murder. His disciples didn't get it. In the face of His warning, they begin to argue about who is the most important among them. Jesus had been teaching them about love and humility and service but His teaching didn't penetrate.

We have this example of Jesus living so humbly, laying down His life for us. But are we capable of absorbing this major element of His teaching and example? Are we willing to lay down our lives for one another? It's asking a lot and yet it is the heart of the matter.

Think of the 343 fire men and 72 police officers who laid down their lives during the 9/11 rescue effort in New York – laid down their lives to save their sisters and brothers. Think of the mothers who risk their lives to bring children including you and me into this world.

It's a difficult lesson to learn and to live and yet it is essential. On March 27, 1996, 7 Trapist monks were beheaded by a terrorist group in Algeria. They could have left but chose to stay with their neighbors, to lay down their lives for them.

Why is it so difficult to learn this lesson, "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all." I believe it is because we have been wounded by the experience of growing up. We have been injured and in reaction to this we build a false self; like the disciples we build an "I'm the greatest self." It never works but we keep on trying.

Today we get a fresh message from Jesus "If you wish to be first, you shall be the last of all and the servant of all". It's a very clear simple teaching but how hard to absorb, to let it change our hearts.

But it happens to a very simple people like you and me. "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name received me..."

We are about to receive this humble One in Holy Communion. He is our strength.