

October 21, 2012 – 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B
Mark 10:35-45

I would like to talk about secrets this morning and I'd like to suggest to you that there are several different kinds of secrets. I know someone who claims one kind of secret is something that you can tell to just one person as long as you tell them, "Now don't tell anyone else this but..." Then that person is allowed to tell one other person what you told them with the same stipulation etc., etc. until, next thing you know you're reading it on Facebook.

Now the real dictionary definition of a secret is "something that should remain hidden from others (especially information that is not to be passed on)." I guess that eliminates my friend's definition as being a secret. But I'd like to propose to you another kind of secret. I think a secret can simply be something that is not hidden, but is not seen or recognized by certain people. I think sometimes a secret can be right in plain sight and overlooked by people, because they are either blind to it or just don't want to see it.

Jesus lets his disciples in on that kind of secret in today's gospel story. He has talked about it with them before, but it is clear that they haven't understood. He knows if James and John are concerned about who is going to have the highest rank in the kingdom of God, they don't understand the secret of the kingdom. It is something he has talked about often. It is something he has modeled and shown them in his life. It is something that has been right there in front of them, in person, but to them the kingdom of God is still a secret .

The kingdom of God is still a secret to many, many people in the world today. I don't think anyone is trying to hide it. It is still in plain sight to anyone who would care to see. People talk about it every Sunday morning. There is a whole book written about it. We call it the Bible. Even though people have tried to spread word of the secret for over 2000 years, there are so few who know the secret.

Some people do know the secret, or at least part of it. They are the ones who know Jesus and the peace he can bring to their life. They know the part of the secret that says that happiness does not lie in the material things of this world. Happiness does not lie in the things we own or the things we control. Happiness does not lie in sitting to the right or the left of those in power. They know that no matter how attractive these things look, you cannot satisfy yourself with wealth, power, drugs or the many other things people get addicted to. They have learned that anything you need more and more of to be satisfied is never going to truly satisfy.

But there is more to the secret than this. Jesus says in today's gospel, "Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest... Whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all." This part of the secret says the greatest happiness in the world, the greatest satisfaction in our lives comes not from seeing to our own wants and pleasures, but from serving the needs of others. And again this secret is in plain sight for anyone to see in the person of Jesus. But still, so few see it. It is a secret to so many in our world.

You may say, "But Jesus lived a long time ago, he is no longer here for us to see. How are we to know this part of the secret?" I would again point to the Bible and the stories of scripture

that keep alive the message of Jesus in our day. But even more than that, I would point you to the men and women who are living their lives today as part of the kingdom of God on earth.

Those people could be anyone around us . They could be your neighbor or they could be the person sitting next to you in your pew. But the ones I would like to particularly point out to you this morning are the professed religious brothers and sisters we have known through our lives. The nuns and brothers whom we have seen caring for others, whether it be in schools, hospitals, nursing homes or right in the streets of our cities and towns.

I'm particularly thinking this morning of the Alexian Brothers with whom I work and who I see giving of themselves to care for others every day of the week. Whether it is caring for an anxious expectant mother, a dying AIDS patient, or a lonely elderly soul with no surviving family, I see the work they do, I see the love with which they do it and I see the abiding peace in these brothers who believe in the secret.

There is nothing secretive in what Jesus did and there is nothing secretive in what his followers do today. But they do know a great secret. They practice this secret openly and in front of many. But it seems many others do not know their secret

We are the ones with whom this secret is shared today. We are privileged to become the body of Christ in the world. It happens whenever we partake of the body and blood of Christ at this table. We receive the secret of God's kingdom and are invited to live it and share it with others. To receive the gift without accepting the responsibility is cheap grace and likens us to the disciples who wanted the crown without the cross. In their defense, they were on the other side of Calvary from us.

As we go from this assembly, we do not go alone. That's the one, last part of the secret. Christ who in every respect has been tempted as we are, accompanies us, strengthens us, suffers with us and will not let us go. Christ shares the secret with us, invites us to live it and to live in the peace only he can give.