

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA WEYMOUTH
HOMILY FOR TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B)

21ST OCTOBER 2012

James and John, two of Jesus' most favoured disciples, came up to him and asked: "Do us a favour, Lord."

No wonder the others were indignant. Jesus had already done them a lot of favours. For a start he had called them to be two of his twelve disciples.

The rest of the world did not enjoy this favour. He had even allowed them and to be with him at his transfiguration so that they could see his glory as the Son of God.

The other nine were not allowed this favour, but James and John were still not satisfied: "Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory," they asked.

What did they really want?

Jesus had told them that in his kingdom he would be the judge of us all, so if James and John sat at his right and left hand they would not be judged themselves. They would be like the X factor panel judging everyone else, shouting "rubbish", "failed" to those they did not like, sending them away in tears.

What power! Perhaps that what they really wanted – power, and that's why Jesus called them all together and explained what he meant by power. He is God the Almighty, but his power is not like human power. He says that human rulers "lord it" over the people they rule.

The original word means to dominate or bully, to love having power and being stronger than other people.

"This must not happen to you," he says to his twelve disciples, the first bishops.

Many of us may be thinking that we have no power anyway, but in fact most of us have some power over others in the skills that we have and others do not. I was powerless when my phone stopped working; the engineer who fixed it has greater power than me. Most people can do something that no one else can - that's power. The point is – how do we use our skill and our power?

Jesus had given James and John power by letting them know more about himself than the other disciples apart from Peter. They wanted to use this power to gain even more power for themselves and give less power to others. Only two could sit at Jesus' right and left hand.

Jesus tells his disciples and us that true power is not forcing other people to do what we want, it's about giving other people what they need.

What people need more than anything is to belong to loving communities where they will be welcome and valued, where their needs will be understood and where they will be supported and encouraged, where they feel loved and at home – Christian communities.

Building community requires the selfless service that Jesus expects from us.

Today is World Mission Day and the second Sunday in our Year of Faith. Our bishops want us to encourage people to return to the Church. This assumes that the Church offers the loving community that other people need and expect to find in the Church - no good inviting people back if they will be disappointed by what they find.

As our response to World Mission and the Year of Faith let's encourage each other to use our skills, our power, in helping each other to build a more loving Christian community, into which we can welcome all who are seeking God.

Rev Geoffrey Carey