



## Things to Ponder

- [About the Author](#)
- [Order](#)
- [About the Book](#)
- [Reviews](#)
- [Readers' Comments](#)
- [News & Events](#)
- [A Prayer for the Day](#)
- [Things To Shout Out!](#)
- [Things to Ponder](#)
- [My Favorite Quotes](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Home](#)

## Homily Reflections – Mark 9:30-37

---

### Introduction: A Holy Ambition

This Sunday's Gospel opens with Jesus once again—for emphasis—predicting his passion, death, and resurrection to his practically clueless disciples. In doing so, he is highlighting the danger they will also face and is trying to prepare his disciples for it. Yet as Mark tells us – the disciples just “don't get it!” Not only do they do not comprehend, but they are afraid to ask what he meant. Perhaps this is an early hint that they were sensing a new and risky situation was emerging that would turn their known world upside down?

*What questions am I afraid to ask?*

Mark then continues by underlining the disciples' lack of understanding in the next episode. Twice before in this Gospel, Mark has shown Jesus telling these disciples that he must be rejected, suffer, and die (8:31; 9:31). Mark has shown Jesus making an explicit connection between his cross and their discipleship (8:34-35). And yet here they are, “discussing among themselves . . . who was the greatest.” Here Mark indicates that they had some sense of the inappropriateness of their discussion by subtly noting that they did not answer Jesus' question but “remained silent.”

Jesus nailed them with this penetrating question: “What were you arguing about on the way?” Not discussing but arguing. One can almost feel their embarrassment. They had been “found out.” In this passage, as well as in precious reports, Mark dramatically shows Jesus progressively teaching The Twelve how to give up the pursuit of worldly power.

*What factors do you consider in decision-making or in your career choices?*

Mark then uses their silence to set up a further teaching by Jesus: “If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.” And he dramatizes Jesus' point by showing him elevate a child in their midst. You and I might easily fail to understand the significance of this action. In first-century Palestine, children were without status or power, possessing no legal rights. In this action, Jesus is teaching The Twelve that when we serve the least among us, we serve Jesus himself.

*Whom have I failed to welcome? How can I open my heart and life to those who are marginalized?*

I would invite you to take time to read and ponder the words from the *Gospel of Mark 9:30-37*.

What word or words caught your attention?  
What in this passage comforted you?  
What in this passage challenged you?

**Further Questions and Reflections:**

The disciples argue among themselves, trying to figure out what Jesus was saying. Yet they are afraid to ask him. Which of us has not struggled to understand certain teachings of our faith, but felt reluctant to ask questions for fear of exposing our ignorance? *Do I welcome questions from others?*

The tenderness of Jesus' love for children is remarkable for a mature man of those times. In every adult, there is an inner child, vulnerable, sensitive, playful, open. Before the world cast its film of familiarity, boredom, and cynicism, the child in us was full of wonder. It is only through wonder that we can experience the glory and the greatness of God. *Is there an "inner child" within you?*

Lord, your message is clear. Ambition that pleases God is shown by humble service of others. Greatness is found not in lording over other people, but in being the servant of the most insignificant people in society – the poor, the weak, the forgotten, the despised.

*How would I "rate" my ambition?*

Let's be honest. It takes a lifetime to realize the silliness of our ego-trips. Lord, do not despair of my silliness, my ego-centered life. Go on teaching me!

Lord Jesus, I am often so slow and dense – like the disciples. Don't give up on me please!

*Deacon David*

Deacon David Suley  
St. Patrick Catholic Church  
Rockville, Maryland

Published with Permission