

Homily based on the readings from May 27, 2026 (1 Peter 1.18-25;
Mark 10.32-45)

“Can you drink the chalice that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” In today’s Gospel, Jesus directly asks James and John, the sons of Zebedee, whether they are willing to share his fate. That fate – at least in human terms – does not seem especially appealing. Our Lord, of course, is destined to suffer the most *agonizing* and *humiliating* form of execution known to the ancient world. Saint James, for his part, did wind up dying for the faith, although not actually on a cross – instead, he was killed by a sword, on the orders of King Herod Agrippa. In fact, he was the first of the Apostles to be martyred – the only one of the Twelve (other than Judas) whose death is explicitly recorded in Scripture.

Tradition teaches that only one of the original Apostles died a natural death. Nevertheless, we must not fall into the trap of imagining that martyrdom is an artifact of ancient times or the privilege of a select few.

Martyrdom, in one form or another, is essential to the life of every Christian. *Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Regardless of whether we actually give up our lives, following Christ requires that we suffer on his behalf. In his letter to the Colossians, Saint Paul writes: “in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church.” In other words, persecution in the name of Jesus is not an anomaly, not a distraction, but an indispensable component of the Christian life.

This perspective, of course, would not make *any* sense without a clear vision of what comes next. As Saint Paul writes to the Romans: “the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us.” This transformation is not a distant promise, but an imminent reality. In today’s first reading, Saint Peter reminds us that – as baptized Christians – we have already “been born anew, not from perishable but from imperishable seed, through the living and abiding

word of God.” While we are still required to face the trials and tribulations of this mortal life, our ultimate destiny lies elsewhere.

Following his discussion with James and John, Our Lord addresses all *twelve* of his Apostles: “whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all.” This is the first step toward discipleship, the first step toward martyrdom: setting aside our own needs and wants, no matter how legitimate they may seem, and offering ourselves up as servants – for our family, for our community, for our Christian brothers and sisters. Jesus came not to *be* served but to *serve*. It is *his* divine example that we must follow, if we hope to share – not only in his earthly sufferings – but in the eternal glories of his heavenly Kingdom.