

Contemporary culture seems to thrive on the extreme.

We have extreme sports - certain activities which have a high-level of perceived threat or danger; often involving high levels of speed, height, or physical exertion.

On television, there are Extreme Makeover, The Extreme Elimination Challenge, Extreme Wrestling, and ... Extreme Couponing.

The world has, it would appear, gone so far - that the question can be posed: How much further can things go? (Just wait for next year.)

In today's readings, that same question could be posed.

In the first reading, seven Hebrew sons are tortured and killed for not abandoning their fidelity to the Mosaic Law - all in the presence of their mother. When it is time to execute the youngest son, the king seems moved with pity and offers money and power to the boy in hopes of sparing his life. He even pressures the boy's mother to plead with him - yet she secretly admonishes her son to persevere.

How far can this go?

In the Gospel, we hear the Lucan rendering of last Sunday's Gospel from Matthew. In this telling, the servants are given equal amounts, and the results reflect the ingenuity of each respective servant.

An underlying sub-plot is an on-going civil war; but on the king's return, the servant who has done nothing is punished as severely as the subjects who were in open rebellion.

How far will we go?

As disciples of Jesus Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, and energized by the graces of the Sacraments - we are entrusted with the treasures of the Kingdom of God. How extreme is our own utilization of these gifts? How far will we go for Christ to do our part to build His kingdom?

Let us pray for the inspiration, the generosity, and the perseverance to go "all the way" for Jesus - that we might fulfill our Baptismal call in an extreme manner. And that we might hear from Christ's lips at the end of time: "Well done, good and faithful servant!"