

Several years back, listening to shock-jock Howard Stern while driving to work one morning, he was commenting about Catholic ‘celebrities.’ His take on the late Pope John Paul II was, “look at him – drooling and slouching and mumbling” ... he added a jibe on Mother Angelica, “and her with that stupid eye patch, crutches and wheelchair,” ... and commented on Blessed Mother Teresa, “she’s so ugly – why would anyone care about her?”

And his ‘punch line’ was, “if this is what getting close to God means, then count me out.”

*“When you come to serve the LORD, stand in justice and fear, prepare yourself for trials.”*

We hear this in the First Reading ... how do we understand this?

Do we run to the front of the line? Or do we slip out the back door?

God’s ways are *not* our ways. So say the prophets. Sirach continues with this advice:

*“Wait on God, with patience, cling to him, forsake him not; thus will you be wise in all your ways. Accept whatever befalls you, when sorrowful, be steadfast, and in crushing misfortune be patient; For in fire gold and silver are tested, and worthy people in the crucible of humiliation.”*

We seem to expect that if we endure something, we will ‘get’ something for it.

So, it’s only natural that when Jesus speaks of his coming passion, the disciples just don’t get it. In fact, they don’t get it so much that they start arguing over who’s the greatest.

Jesus responds by saying:

*“If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”*

How does any of this make sense? Especially in a materialistic world where health, wealth, nice clothes, good looks, and power are important to the culture?

It doesn’t

God is Love. And the world is not. Love is all the things listed in the first reading: mercy, trust, hope, joy, love, enlightenment.

Let us pray that we can approach life with the eyes of faith and not the eyes of the world.

As we approach Lent – let us pray for the grace to be immersed in God’s infinite love; and in turn to become love; and bring that love to a world hungering for it.

*“If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all.”*

Will you let me be your servant,  
let me be as Christ to you?  
Pray that I might have the grace to  
let you be my servant, too.