



## The treasure within us

From the Feast of St. James the Apostle

Read:  
Matthew 20:20-28  
2 Corinthians 4:7-15

Saint James "the Greater", the Apostle whose Feast Day we celebrate on July 25<sup>th</sup>, was one of the sons of Zebedee mentioned in Matthew 20:20-28.

James started his Christian journey as a very impulsive, self-centered young man. Even after hearing Jesus preach about unconditional love, he told Jesus to destroy the villages that had rejected them and their ministry. And even after hearing Jesus teach about humility, he dared to ask Jesus (through Mom) for a place of honor in God's kingdom.

Praise God, James eventually developed a true understanding of Christ's message!

We are all earthen vessels – imperfect, shaped too much by the world around us, easily cracked, not very beautiful – but nonetheless holding a heavenly treasure within, as it says in 2 Corinthians 4:7-15. That treasure is God's love. It's a treasure that's meant to be shared. Although we are chipped and cracked, we are like the chalice that holds the Precious Blood of Jesus during communion at Mass, pouring Christ out to others.

That treasure is God himself, and as such it makes us holy even when we sin. Unless we deliberately reject God (a mortal sin), we remain essentially holy because we were made in his image and we have been baptized into his likeness. We don't always act holy, but we do always have God's Holy Spirit within us.



How much we act like Jesus is how far we have gone in letting the Holy Spirit purify our lives.

The Lord gives us room to learn from our mistakes and repent from our sins. He gives us opportunity after opportunity to figure out what we did wrong – not to condemn us but so that we can learn from it. Repentance means change. What matters more than confessing our sins is the effort that we put into improving our behavior after we repent of our sins.

If we desire to be holy and we basically keep moving in the right direction toward heaven's perfection, God is very pleased with us.

Notice that Jesus did not condemn James and John for wanting places of glory. Nor did he criticize their mother for wanting her boys to have the best. He recognized their potential and understood their inability to see the full picture of what it means to be tops in God's kingdom.

As earthen vessels tended by God's loving hands, our cracks are healed through the Sacraments of Confession, Eucharist, and the Anointing of the Sick. Eventually, we will become golden chalices, perfected by the refining fires of Purgatory where demons and temptations can no longer interfere with our purification.

When you get mad at yourself for failing to be holy and perfect, remember Saint James. In fact, ask Saint James to pray for you. He knows exactly how to help you.