

Homily for 29th Sunday Year B

People want to win, not lose; they seek to dominate, not to serve. God thinks the opposite way and, to educate his people to accept the logic of the gift of life since the Old Testament he indicated a pattern: his faithful Servant. Today's Scripture readings explain service and sacrifice as the criteria of greatness in Christ's Kingdom. In the first part of the first reading the humble appearance of this Servant is described. The second part shows the opposite judgment of God. That which people consider a failure, for the Lord it is a success. It is through sacrifice, suffering, self-giving that God carries out his plans of salvation. The second reading tells us that Jesus is a high priest who is able to sympathize with us in our weakness because he has been tested in every way. Today's Gospel explains how Jesus has accomplished his mission of saving mankind from the slavery of sin by becoming the "Suffering Servant." *Once a domestic servant came to his master in great anger and told him, "Look, I am not going to serve you any longer as you do not have any faith in me though I am serving you so loyally for the past several years." Master: "What is the matter? I have faith in you, that is why I have given all the keys of the house including those of the safe, to you." Servant: "No, you do not have faith in me, I am sure." Master: "How do you say that?" Servant: "I tried all the keys and not one fits the safe".*

We are challenged to give our lives in loving service to others. The best place to begin the process of service by "self-giving," is in our own homes and workplaces. When parents sacrifice their time, talents, health and blessings for the welfare of others in the family, they are serving God. One day Socrates was laughing away and someone asked him, what was so amusing? Look, he said, there is a stone in the middle of the road. Already I have counted six people stumble and fall. Each one would get up dust their clothes, stare intently at the stone, curse it, and go their way. But none of them ever thought of removing it. If something has to be done by someone, be that someone. Service always involves suffering, because we can't help another without some sacrifice on our part. We are rendering great service to others also when we present them and their needs before God daily in our prayers. When I speak here of service, I am talking about our whole purpose of life, that is, to live for God and to do some definitive service with my life. The Venerable Cardinal John Henry Newman wrote: "God has created me to do some definite service." We serve others for the glory of the Lord.

Kipling has a poem called "Mary's Son" which is advice on the spirit in which a man must work. If you stop to find out what your wages will be and how they will clothe and feed you, Willie, my son, don't you go on the Sea. For the Sea will never need you. If you ask for the reason of every command, and argue with people about you, Willie, my son, don't you go on the Land, for the Land will do better without you. If you stop to consider the work you have done and to boast what your labour is worth, dear, Angels may come for you, Willie, my son, But you'll never be wanted on Earth, dear! Rabindranath Tagore, wrote this short poem: I slept and dreamt that life was Joy; Then I awoke and realized that life was Service. And then I went to work - and, lo and behold, I discovered that Service is Joy. Today's readings teach us that true happiness comes from surrendering ourselves completely in humble service to God through Christ. And all we need is a servant's heart, mind, eyes and touch. So, "How's Your Serve?" . Lord, make me the servant of all.