

## 29TH SUNDAY, ORD. (B) A CALL TO SERVE

Nobody wants to be associated with servitude or slavery, because of the dehumanizing nature of it. No one wants to be a slave or servant; we all want to be bosses. But in the Scriptures, we are called to be servants and slaves of God. God Himself is our servant because He is always at our service offering us all our needs.

The first reading talks about the Suffering Servant. It pleased God for His Servant to suffer, but through the suffering, something good would come out of it. "If he gives his life as an offering for sin, he shall see his descendants in a long life, and the will of the Lord shall be accomplished through him". Through his suffering the servant shall justify many and bear their guilt.

This Servant is associated with Jesus who came into this world in a humble state and took our human nature. "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, He was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross," (Phil. 2:7-8). He was as we are, yet without sinning.

Unfortunately, those Jesus chose to be with Him were thinking more about positions and power. This is what we heard in the gospel when John and his brother James came to ask for. Jesus made it clear to them that following Him entails service and suffering. Drinking the cup is a symbol of suffering (His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane). The ten were not happy with John and James because they asked for positions. This means that all of them had in mind to be given positions in the kingdom. They thought of earthly kingdoms like the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus corrected them and told them to be servants and slaves of all, if they wanted to be great.

All disciples of Jesus are called to be servants and slaves of all peoples. To be able to serve is to have the virtue of humility. This was the first virtue Jesus exhibited in coming to this world; and it is manifested in His life from

birth to death. To serve is to give one's self to another for his or her welfare. Service also goes with suffering and this is what Jesus experienced; and by His suffering, we are healed.

We are to suffer for Christ and others, and as St. Peter told the believers, "None of you should ever deserve to suffer for being a murderer, a thief, a criminal or an informer; but if any one of you should suffer for being a Christian, then there must be no shame but thanksgiving to God for bearing this name," (1Pet.4:15-16).

As Christians we are called to serve in so many ways. It starts from our homes. Husbands and wives are to serve each other; parents are to serve their children, and children in turn are to serve their parents. We are to offer our service to the society and nation, and the Church. And in doing all these, our aim is to serve God. This is what St. Paul told the Colossians: "Whatever your work is, put your heart into it as done for the Lord and not for human beings, knowing that the Lord will repay you by making you His heirs. It is Christ the Lord that you are serving," (Col.3:23-24).

There is nothing demeaning about serving others. It is rather an honour and a privilege, especially when you want to serve God. Moses, David, Mary and many people whose names we find in the scriptures considered themselves servants of God. Due to their faithful service to God, they are now great men and women in the Lord. They are like the faithful servant who faithfully discharged his duty and was later asked to be in charge of the master's property, described in the gospel; (Mt.25:45-51).

Many of us want to run away from serving the Lord faithfully because of the suffering involved. The Servant of the Lord willingly suffered for the sins of others; Jesus died to save us. He is willing and continues to help us in times of need. "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need".