

29TH SUNDAY – ORD. TIME (B)

THE WILLINGNESS TO SERVE

One of the titles or descriptions people don't want to be associated with is being called a "servant or slave". Most of the time it is considered as demeaning and makes one less important. It is taken to be describing someone as a lower-class citizen. People don't want to be servants because it goes with work and toil.

But we tend to forget that most great people, if not all, made themselves servants, or assumed the nature of a servant to reach the height. Moses was considered the servant of God, (Nm.12:7); Mary considered Herself as the Maidservant of the Lord, (Lk.1:38); Paul always described himself as the servant of Christ Jesus, (Rom.1:1). Most importantly, God Himself is a servant to His creatures, because since creation, He has not stopped working to save us. Day and night, He serves us through His angels.

Today's readings throw more light on what servanthood leads to. The first reading describes the willingness of the servant to suffer. "He has made himself an offering for sin". This self-giving would bring him good things; his days would be prolonged, he would prosper, save his soul and make others righteous. Thus, the desire to suffer for others would earn him everlasting joy.

The greatest servant we can think of is Jesus, the God-made-Man. Even though He was and is God, He emptied Himself and taking the nature of a slave died a shameful death, (Phil.2). He did that for the salvation of all. This is what being a servant leads to. But His disciples wanted to be bosses. He asked whether they were ready to drink the cup. The cup signifies suffering and that was what we read about when Jesus was praying in the garden of Gethsemane. He told them that if they wanted to be great then they should be prepared to suffer.

Like the apostles, many of us would like to be bosses so that we can lord it over others. We want people at our beck and call to serve us.

But we forget that every day we are called to be servants in all we do. We should remember that even our jobs by which we get our pay checks are means of serving our community and nation. The farmer, the fisherman, the nurse, the doctor, the manager, the scientist, the sportsman, the military, the

laborer, in fact, whatever our profession is and whatever we do, we should first consider ourselves as servants.

With that in mind, we can work diligently, selflessly, and with dedication and we will be filled with joy. It is then that our work will be meaningful and rewarding.

From the lives of many people, past and present, being a servant is associated with humility and gentleness. It does away with self-love and arrogance. The other person is considered first, because the desire is to help that person or group of people. Am I willing to serve? What is my attitude towards work, and how do I approach work? What is my attitude towards those who do menial jobs? Do I respect them or look down upon them? Jesus was not ashamed to call us His brothers. "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). "Let us then with confidence draw near the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need".