

TWENTY NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME B2024

Our society considers as great, people who are popular and successful in their lives. While some of those people have done spectacular things, others have been exemplary by the quality of their service at the benefice of their fellows.

Whatever might be, however, the opinion of society, one thing is sure: without sacrifice and self-denial, without renunciation and sometimes the commitment to do good to others, these people would not have been praiseworthy.

It is that willingness to accept suffering for the good of his fellows that makes the servant of today's first reading unique and special. He intentionally took on himself the guilt of his fellows in order to bring them salvation. Acting according to God's will, he gave his life as an offering for sin. In accepting humiliation and affliction, he became a light for others and a source of life for them.

What this text teaches us is that to be at God's service implies sacrifice, self-denial and even the giving up of one's life for the good of others. In an anticipative way, this text talks about the life and the mission of our Lord Jesus. It is he who has come not to be served, but to serve. It is he who gave up his life on the cross for us as ransom so that we live and be delivered from our sins.

Even though at the end of our Lord's passion and death there was the resurrection, nonetheless his was a life of suffering and self-denial, and not that of easy glory. That should be clear in the minds of all those who accept to follow him. It is always a misunderstanding to think that because we are Christians, we cannot suffer or get sick. Some among us have lost their faith in Jesus because they have been involved in human suffering. They have forgotten that there is no glory without suffering and sacrifice. It would be an illusion to think that Jesus has promised us an easy way to glory.

That explains the reaction of our Lord to the request of the two brothers who wanted a privileged place in his Kingdom. The glory of our Lord comes out of sharing of his blood for the salvation of humanity. His glory is that comes out of self-denial and service; it is not a glory that comes out of being served as the great of this world do.

Therefore, whoever wants to belong to him should be ready to experience hatred, pain and death. That is what it means to drink his cup or be baptized in his baptism. In other words, our Lord wants to tell us that without the cross, there is no crown. The standard of the greatness in the kingdom of God is service, humility, sacrifice and not otherwise. Only the Father can determine in his judgement who is worthy of belonging to his Kingdom. He gives it to those who are worthy of him. That is his privilege and prerogative.

Our Lord wants this lesson to be observed by all his disciples. That is why he called the disciples to him and made clear to them about the standards of God's kingdom, which are different from world's standards. In this world the standard of greatness is power, domination, success and honor. In God's kingdom, the standard of greatness is service and humility. Greatness consists not in reducing others to one's service, but in giving oneself to the service of others.

The drama of our society is that we naturally like to be served than to serve. We want to do as little as possible and to get as much as possible from the service of others. We want to take advantage of others as possible as we can. In the end, the principle of life given by Jesus seems strange to us. And yet, it is only when we are filled with the desire to put into life more than what we take out of it for ourselves that we can be worthy of the kingdom of God.

We need people whose ideal of life is to serve unselfishly, without gain or calculation. Our Lord himself is our model and example. He knows very well the ups and downs of human life. He knows what it costs to be human and how we can win the friendship of God.

He is our great high priest who comes from the Father. He is like us in all things, except sin. He went through everything a man can go through, but in any of them, he emerged victorious. He knew the tensions and assaults of temptations any human being can go through, but he triumphed.

For that reason, he is capable of sympathize with us, because he knows what temptation means. Therefore, let us approach the throne of his grace with trust in order to receive mercy and to find grace for the time of help. He is able of understanding us when we are struggling with temptations. He is full of mercy toward us because he has been there before us.

When someone has been there, it makes all the difference. And there is no human experience of which God cannot say "I have been there". When we have a sad story to tell, when life has pushed us to tears, we do not go to a God who is incapable of understanding what has happened to us; we go to a God who has been there. It is for that reason that God finds it easy to forgive.

Our Lord knows our problems, because he has come from them. The best person to give you advice and help on a journey is someone who has travelled that road before you. Our Lord can help us because he knows all that it means to be human. Our Lord is the perfect high priest because he is perfectly man and perfectly God. Because he knows what it means to be human, he can have sympathy and mercy on us.

Let us turn to him and pray on this day of world mission for all the missionaries evangelizing throughout the world. Let us ask him to bless the work of evangelization accomplished throughout the world. At his example, let us serve our fellows with joy and restrain from taking advantage of them or exploiting them. Let us trust our Lord and go to him to receive grace and forgiveness. May our greatness be seen through our service to our fellows!

Isaiah 53: 10-11; Hebrews 4: 14-16; Mark 10: 35-45



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