

## **29<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time: Being Humble Servant Fro the Kingdom of God**

Isaiah 53:10-11; Psalm 33:4-5,18-19,20,22; Hebrews 4:14-16; Mark 10:35-45

*How can all the members of the Catholic Church be more effective in proclaiming the living Jesus Christ to the world?*

This is the key question the Bishops will reflect on and discuss during the Synod of Bishops scheduled on October 2023 in Rome. In preparation for this synod, Pope Francis requested all the archdioceses and dioceses worldwide to ask the Catholic Faithful to talk about this key question and engage in the process that starts this weekend.

Bishop Larry Silva will present the document in one of the Masses at the Basilica of the Cathedral of our Lady Peace this week. The document will guide our input for the Synod of Bishops. It will be published through the Catholic Herald, the website of the diocese, and also on our parish website.

I think the compelling value in taking part in the process is to rekindle in us the vitality and joy of the early Christians to proclaim Jesus as well as the enthusiasm of St. Paul, who said, "woe to me, if I don't preach the crucified and risen Lord!"

How can we be more effective in proclaiming the living Jesus Christ to the world? Let us keep this question in mind as we reflect on our readings this Sunday.

The story of James and John, who requested a place of honor, is a classic example of the human need to be significant. They asked the Lord Jesus: "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." It could probably be an innocent request, but it made the rest of the disciples indignant. They were indignant because the two brothers went ahead of them. Some of them probably would like to ask the same request themselves. The drive for a place of honor or higher positions often results in rivalry and conflict, and worst, causes a toxic environment.

Our Lord Jesus draws his disciples' attention to focus on the spirit of a servant-leader. He told them, "Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all." He invites them to embrace to be humble servants of all and choose to be the last.

For Jesus, greatest is not to be seen in the position of honor, influence, or fame, or capacity to manipulate and control. The greatest is seen in serving humbly. In the estimation of the kingdom of the world, slaves are the lesser persons in the community. If you are a servant or slave, you are the last, but if you are powerful, you are the first. If you are the one being served, you have the power and influence. But in the kingdom of Jesus, we have to operate on a different understanding of being great and of being the first. What the world considers last and less important is where we locate greatness. You are first when you are last. You are great when you are a slave for all. So, the followers of Jesus have to locate greatness in humble service for the Kingdom of God.

What Jesus told his disciples manifested his way of being the Lord. He said, "for the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." He made it clear that he was different from the other leaders and lords. He will be a servant. A suffering servant proclaimed by Prophet Isaiah who will assume the afflictions supposedly for us, sinners so that we will have hope. He will accept a servant's life who is willing to suffer for the people he is serving. It is an unusual view of being a servant. But it is how Jesus presents himself, a savior who is willing to suffer for the sake of those he is going to save. It is the confidence of the Book of Hebrews to say that he is our high priest who sympathizes with us because he is not distant from our human condition. He suffered when he became a human person like us. Because of his sufferings, he can now be a compassionate, high priest to us sinners.

Our Lord Jesus is paving the way the spirit of servanthood: the way to being great is to choose to be a servant of all and put others first. Of course, it is easier said than done. It is a great challenge to be a servant-leader, to choose to be the last and embrace the virtue of humility for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

I remember a story that has a semblance of the story of one of our priests back home. One day one of the parishioners went to a parish to speak with a priest. She saw a young man fixing an old Volkswagen car and asked him for the pastor, and she inquired, "Boy, I am here to speak with the pastor. The young man presented himself and insisted that she could

talk to him. The Manang responded immediately, "Please, I need to talk to a priest." The young man went inside the rectory, and then slammed the door as soon as he returned. The old lady saw that he was wearing a white Sotana. She was surprised and said, "oh, boy! I didn't know that you are a Sacristan. The secretary came and said, " Manang, he is our new pastor.

If we choose the way of Jesus, our life will never have a dull moment, nor will we be left alone. He is there with us and before us. He will never run out of graces to strengthen us if we ask and hold on to him.

How can you be more effective in proclaiming the living Jesus Christ to the world? This key question presupposed our personal encounter of the risen Lord -- that we know Jesus; that he is our Savior; that we love him; that he is the center of our life; that it is him we received in the Holy Eucharist.

What is it can you do this week to be a servant of Jesus? Let me propose and identify some simple opportunities which we can also call little ways.

- When your friends start to gossip about someone, change the subject.
- Look for someone to give your seat on the bus.
- When someone cuts in front of you, allow the person and pray for the person's safety.
- Visit sick and older people this week and ask them to pray for you and assure them of your prayer.

Let us also remember the advice of our patron St. Therese of the Child Jesus. Our Lord Jesus does not look so much at the greatness of our actions, nor even at their difficulty, but at the love with which we do them.

God bless you.

Fr. Manny Hewe  
Pastor