

## 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year

**Is 53:10-11; Heb 4:14-16; Mk 10:35-45**

Today's readings describe leadership as the sacrificial service done for others and it presents Jesus as the best example for it. They also explain the servant leadership of Jesus, pointing service and sacrifice as the criteria of greatness in Christ's Kingdom.

The first reading tells how the promised Messiah will save mankind by sacrificing himself as the ransom for our sins. Jesus has done this sacrificial service of love for us as the Suffering Servant by giving his life on the cross as an offering for sin, interceding for us and taking our punishment on himself. The second reading, tells us that, Jesus has offered a fitting sacrifice to God his Father by offering himself as ransom to liberate us from the slavery of sin. In the time of Jesus, ransom was the price paid to free someone from slavery. Sometimes the ransomer offered himself as a substitute for the slave, as Jesus did.

The reading also speaks of a high priest who is able to sympathize with us in our weakness because he has been tested in every way, though sinless, and so, we can "confidently" hope for God's mercy. Today's Gospel explains how Jesus has accomplished his mission of saving mankind from the slavery of sin by becoming the "Suffering Servant." Here, Jesus challenges his followers to become great by serving others with sacrificial love, that is, *"Whoever wishes to be great must be a servant."* Jesus commands us to liberate others by giving ourselves to them in loving and humble service, as Jesus freed us.

We are challenged to give our lives in loving service to others. To become an authentic disciple of Jesus means to put ourselves in the humble, demanding role of servant to others, to seek intentionally the happiness and fulfillment of those we love regardless of the cost to ourselves. The best place to begin the process of "self-giving" service is in our own homes and in the workplace. We have to look upon our education, training, and experience as preparation for service to others. Whatever may be our place in society - whether important or unimportant - we can serve.

We should learn to serve with a smile. This is possible whether we are in military service, social service, law, medical service, government or business. We get chances to serve others every day- nurses serve their patients, teachers their students, parents serve the needs of their children, and spouses serve each another. In our parishes, we are also called to serve, not

to be served. We can here apply the famous “ask not” of John Kennedy: “Ask not what your parish, what your Church, your God can do for you; rather, ask, what you can do for your parish, for your Church, your God!” If we want to be leaders, we must learn to be available, accountable, and simple.

*We serve by suffering:* In today’s Gospel, Jesus connects service with suffering. Suffering and service go hand in hand. First, service always involves suffering because one can’t help another without some personal sacrifice. Second, God always invites those who suffer to put their suffering at the service of others by uniting it with the salvific suffering of Jesus. Third, we must learn to be sensitive to the suffering of those around us. One way to cultivate this sensitivity is to focus on the needs of others rather than on our own needs.

*We are invited to drink from the cup of Christ’s suffering:* People often tailor their religious beliefs to fit their own needs. In Christianity, this represents a false approach. The Church needs true disciples who are cross-bearers and servants. They seek and follow Christ wherever he leads. A happy family is the result of true sacrifice and humble service. The husband and wife sacrifice convenience, comfort, and time. There can be no success without sacrifice. We are challenged to drink the cup of Jesus by laying down our lives in humble and sacrificial service for others, just as Jesus did.

*We are invited to servant leadership:* We are a community of equals and we share in the responsibilities of being community. In order to be effective, we need leaders – both ordained, as *ministerial priests*, and lay. These servants have been raised up from among us to call us to order, to be the ground on which the rest of us can move around, refining our lives as followers of Jesus. We need leaders who will help us to form a relationship with God and with each other that will assist us to become what we must be in order to wash one another’s feet. We require leaders to call us to the ways of social justice. We need leaders who tie us to other communities and groups who share similar values. Finally, we need leaders who can break open the word for us, who can lead us in our prayer, offer us on the altar, and who can draw us together as sacrament. None of us possesses all that we as a community need, so our job as *servant leaders* is to evoke, to recognize, to nurture, to celebrate and to help to unify the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work here in our community.