

Called to Be Servants

Daily Gospel and Meditation / Liturgical Cycle A

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Matthew 20: 20-28

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. And he said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to him, "We are able." He said to them, "You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, in spite of my many failures, I know you continue to call me. Your Spirit continues to guide me. I trust in you, love you and praise you for all your gifts to me. Amen.

Petition: Lord Jesus, grant me a renewed sensitivity to the deepest needs of others.

1. Called to Serve: In an era of Catholicism in which catch-phrases such as "called to serve" have been overused to the point of becoming clichés, we risk forgetting how central service is to the Christian life. The minutes of our lives are consumed in an incessant cascade of apparently important and urgent things to do. Doesn't it happen, however, that in the midst of all this we actually miss any number of opportunities to serve? Called to serve, yes, but we miss the call! And our service gets sidelined. If service to my brothers and sisters is not an ordinary element of my daily life as a Christian, I can be sure that I have succumbed to self-deception or taken a critically wrong turn somewhere.

2. A Continuation of Christ: We are called to give ourselves unreservedly to others as a continuation of Christ. "A continuation of Christ": now, wouldn't that make a wonderful epitaph?! For truly, if our Christian service is not a prolongation, an extension of Jesus' love, if we are not giving him to others, if those whom we serve are not discovering him in us, then our service is simply not service. It might be philanthropy, it might be empathy, but it falls short of genuine Christian service if those whom we serve do not discover Christ in us. Like John the Baptist, we must become less so that Jesus can become more in us, so that our brothers and sisters are not cheated out of encountering that Christ whom they secretly long to discover in each of us.

3. What Service Means: Here it will be helpful simply to examine ourselves on some of the essentials of Christian service. Is my daily life characterized by a concern for the genuine good of others and by a readiness to do all the good I can for my brothers and sisters? Do I actually engage in daily acts of service, whether big or small? Do I examine myself frequently on the sin of omission? Do I strive, in carrying on the ordinary service required by my state in life, to do so with extraordinary deliberateness and full, conscious self-giving?

Conversation with Christ: Father, you call me to serve, and I know that service also means suffering at times. If suffering is to be a part of your plan for me, give me the grace to collaborate with Christ your son in the salvation of souls by offering that suffering generously to you. I ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Resolution: Out of love for Christ, present in the least of my brothers and sisters, I will examine myself on what genuine Christian service means to me in practice, and what place it usually has in my daily life.