

Homily October 21/21, 2018

Twenty-ninth Sunday of Ordinary Time

What is your favorite song in the Breaking Bread song book? Perhaps you have many favorites. I do. One of my most favorite songs is 'The Servant Song', #387. This song embodies the Ames Catholic Community Stephen Ministry program. The first verse goes like this: "Will you let me be your servant, Let me be as Christ to you; Pray that I may have the grace to Let you be my servant too." The entire theme of this song is one of being a servant to others. You may ask, how does being a servant and 'The Servant Song' relate to today's readings? There is actually a very strong connection with being a servant and today's readings.

The Greek word 'Diakonos' means servant. Translated into English this word is 'Deacon'. In the Catholic Church, Deacons are configured to Christ in their servanthood. So being a servant to others is a large portion of the life of those of us ordained as Deacons. By way of their ordination as a transitional Deacon, Priests and Bishops also are configured to Christ in their servanthood. Last Sunday Pope Francis canonized six individuals, including both Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Oscar Romero. These two men configured to Christ in their ordination as transitional Deacons are now Saints of the Church, where they continue to serve those of us on earth through their prayers and intercessions for us.

In today's first reading from Isaiah, we heard that the servant suffered greatly, but through his suffering many were justified or were acquitted. This passage can be taken as an Old Testament prequel for Christ being the servant of all as He suffered on the cross for our sins so that we may live.

The shortest verse in the Bible is "Jesus wept". This occurred when Jesus went to see his friend Lazarus who had already died. Jesus shared with us all human emotions. His suffering on the cross as high priest and servant of all allows Christ to relate to us even today, two thousand years after his death, with our own sufferings

here on earth. He understands the trials and tribulations we all work through in our earthly lives. -As new parents as we serve our helpless infants. -As older parents as we watch our children go to school for the first time and later when they leave home to start out on their own, whether to college or as they start their own individual life journey. -Even as grandparents, when we see our new grandchild for the first time and knowing that we always want what is best for them, but also knowing that we need to let their parents, our children, make those decisions. Being a servant to others is a lifelong task. We need to be servants to all those we meet in every aspect of our lives. None of us know how even the smallest act of kindness may be seen to someone else as the greatest gift to them. A gift of love and compassion. This is true servanthood, being compassionate to all, even those on the fringes of today's society.

Jesus says in today's Gospel reading, just after James and John requested to be seated in Heaven 'one at His right and one at His left'; "Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all." Christ is essentially saying that those who wish to be the greatest in heaven should fashion their lives around one of servanthood. One who serves others. Our Ames Community Catholic Stephens Ministry program is a program of servanthood to others. This confidential, Christian centered, caring, and listening ministry is truly one where the Stephen Ministers are serving their care receivers. They accomplish this by listening to the troubles and concerns of their care receivers and by walking with them on their healing journey as the care receivers determine their own individual correct path to wholeness again. Stephen Ministers are serving those who need our help, just as Christ served all of us as He hung on the cross carrying all of our sins.

Let us be servants to all and always be willing to act as Christ's hands and feet for others. May the joy and peace of the Lord be always with you.

*Deacon Mark Bortle*