



CALLED TO SERVICE

Have you noticed how often the word service is used in our society? When we dine out, a major element of our enjoyment of the meal is a result of the "service" we are given. For those of us who can remember, the places where we fuel our cars were once known as "service stations." When we call to get help with our computers, to order cable TV or even make a doctor's appointment, we are likely to talk with a "customer service representative."

What we do in church is known as a "service" and the work performed by military personnel is known as "service" to their country. We are told that our economy is no longer based on the manufacture and sale of goods but is now a "service-based" economy. And, of course, government employees who bring our mail, forecast our weather, protect our elected officials or collect our taxes are members of the "Postal Service," the "National Weather Service," the "Secret Service" or the "Internal Revenue Service." "Service" has many meanings and, on this Mission Sunday, it includes the efforts of men and women and children who work to spread the gospel and offer Christ's healing and forgiveness to those who have never known him.

Service to others is an essential component of Christianity. Believing in God and acknowledging Jesus as Lord are important as are study, prayer and meditation, but the true mark of our faith is how we treat others.

Isaiah writes of a "Suffering Servant" who wins forgiveness and healing for the world. The reference in Isaiah to a "Servant" is believed to be a reference to Israel. The Servant gives his life as an offering for sin. The will of the Lord will be accomplished through the Servant. Though the Servant was tormented, killed and buried in a grave among the wicked, God is pleased with him. The Servant is given honors and rewards as a result of the rejection and suffering he experienced.

Christ is the ultimate high priest. Jesus is our high priest who can do great things for us. He is not only divine, but also human, and knows what it is like to be tested. As a result of his humanity, he can sympathize with us. Christ is our advocate with the Father in heaven. As our high priest, Christ gives us access to God's mercy and grace.

Those who want to become great must serve the rest. Jesus had predicted his passion, but the disciples misunderstood what he was saying. James and John asked if they could have places of glory at the sides of Jesus. Jesus probed to see what they did understand and made it clear that they were confused. The other disciples became upset with James and John. Jesus explained that his followers must be people who decline places of worldly honor. Christ has come not to be served but to give everything he has. His disciples are asked to do what he does.

Followers of Christ are called to follow his example and live lives of service. We must put our priorities in order. For disciples of Christ true success involves an attitude of service toward others. According to the Gospel, Jesus' disciples never quite understood what he was saying. The message remains difficult for us today. After two thousand years, we are in a better position to understand.

We are called to follow Christ with an attitude of service toward others. As many in our society strive for success, fame and wealth, followers of Christ are asked to look for opportunities to serve others. Our celebration of the Eucharist is an acknowledgment of our dependence on God and each other and our willingness to follow Christ's example.

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