

2019.10.06 Homily by Fr. Gabor C-6

Last Sunday and the Sunday before there was a strong emphasis on service, and Jesus warned us that you cannot be a servant of both God and money, and you cannot serve both your neighbour and money.

Through today's Gospel reading Jesus speaks to us about the way we ought to serve God and one another; namely about humble service, but first He gives us His own supreme example of it.

First of all He is referred to by the prophet Isaiah as the suffering Servant of God our Father (cf. Isaiah 42:1-4; Isaiah 49:1-6; Isaiah 50:4-7; and Isaiah 52:13-53:12), but He is not merely that, because before He starts his service, the Father identifies Him as His beloved Son at His baptism (see Mt 3: 13-17). **So He is a suffering beloved servant. As such/**then he comes among us to serve the Father's loving plan of Salvation. He disregards His own divinity and filled with the power and love of the Holy Spirit He serves the Father's plan as the Spirit prompts Him, and He carries out His service with a total and intimate love for the Father through oppositions, trials and suffering right till the end, until He gives up His life.

Jesus doesn't only show an example of humble service to the Father, but to His disciples as well while they are obsessed with who is the greatest among them. He lowers himself by washing the feet of His beloved disciples and makes Himself the Servant of His servants (John 13:1-17). He nourishes them, He encourages them, and He teaches them and reveals to them the secrets of the Kingdom of God (Mt 13:11; Mk 4:11), therefore He no longer considers the apostles as His servants, but as his friends (John 15:15), and enters into a mutual and loving relationship with His servant friends. In fact He treats them as family members, as brothers of OUR Father (John 20:17, Mt 6:9). It is His deep and intimate love for us and not only for the Father that inspires Him to serve us as His OWN (cf. John 13:1.33-35).

Now in today's Gospel reading Jesus speaks to his apostles and tells them that they are also to be humble and loving servants of Him, their Master, and so glorify the Father, and to continue to bring to fulfilment His plan of Salvation once He has ascended to the Father. So therefore just as He has served the Father, filled with the Holy Spirit, so the apostles are also to serve the Father, the Master, and fellow human beings. Therefore He fills them with His Spirit (John 20:22), and through baptism in the Spirit they become Sons of the Father. But they also have to pass through trials and challenges, just like their Master, because a servant is no greater than his Master (John 15:20), but He promises them that if they triumph they will

also enter into the Kingdom of the Father (Mt 5:12; 1 Cor 3:13-15; James 1:12; Rev 2:10; 7: 14; 22:3 ff.).

Their loving and humble service has been ongoing ever since Jesus' time, but it is very important to note that we are not to be servants of the letter of the Law, but of the living and loving God who put His Spirit into our hearts to guide us in our service of Him and neighbour. Serving God and neighbour in practice means proclaiming the message of Christ in the spirit of love and mercy. If you don't feel confident **to do so** then you need to study the Bible and live it so that you experience its power. Some of you are called to show the power of God's word in practical service to your neighbour. And sometimes we have to do this in tears and tribulations, just as the apostles did (Acts 20:19), but we are to do so always in the spirit of love for God and neighbour, and in the spirit of humility and inner freedom, not bothering about what others will say, if you know that the Holy Spirit is guiding your action. Service merely by obedience to the letter of the Law or merely out of duty is not favourable in God's eyes and it doesn't work, because it is a spiritless, dead action which often leads to a cold, legalistic mental attitude in service. God the Father loves the cheerful servant who puts His heart into what He says or does. When you put your heart into your service His warmth, joy, love and mercy will shine through what you do or say. This is the kind of servant that Jesus wants you to be like.