

HOMILY SUNDAY 29 – B (Homily 03)

“Humble Loving Service”

(Isaiah 53:4, 10-11; Ps 33; Heb 4:14-16; Mk 10:39-45)

The last sentence of the Gospel today succinctly captures the message of all three readings: “The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” We are invited to follow Jesus into a life of humble, loving service.

The temptation that faces each of us every day in our present culture is to sell out to possessions, prestige and power. These are the three temptations that Jesus faced in the desert and refused. They are also the three temptations that the Chosen people faced throughout their history. However, they consistently succumbed to these temptations, wanting to be like their neighbors, with land, temple and kings.

Fr. Ray Dlugos, former director of the Southdown Institute, a renewal center for clergy and religious, shed an interesting insight into these temptations at a conference for major religious superiors.

He mentioned that there are actually only two temptations; the temptation to be more than human, and the temptation to be less than human. To fall for prestige and power is to try to be more than human, to be proud and judgmental; to stay above the pain of being human and all that this entails, to deny our own sinful reality. On the other hand, to fall for possessions is to be less than human, to give in to addictions and a loose way of life.

The challenge is to accept our humanity, our weakness, our woundedness, and to turn to the Lord for the strength we need to overcome our sinfulness, and to heal our shortcomings. That is the road to being fully human, to being a faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

There is a storefront church in Washington DC that offers a Servant Leadership School. Renowned spiritual writer Henri Nouwen spent some time there, soaking up the spirit of servant leadership, in his quest to become more fully human himself.

Isaiah in the first reading describes the suffering servant of Yahweh, who we know would be Jesus. He reminds us that God will draw good out of that suffering and evil which to most makes no sense. The novel *Silence* which describes the suffering of the early Christians in Japan, where priests were pressured to reject their faith in Jesus by being made to hear the screams of the faithful who were tortured, highlighted the silence of God. That silence called for tremendous faith on the part of all the victims of that torture.

The author of the book of Hebrews, in the second reading, knows how impossible this challenge to be a suffering servant can be. He reminds us that Jesus is also the high priest who took on our sinful humanity, who suffered as much or more than anyone else, and would now empower us to follow in his footsteps, willing to live lives of humble, selfless, suffering service.

Jean-Pierre Provost, in his commentary in the *Living With Christ* for this Sunday, put it this way: “Our pride should not reside in being considered the greatest of the most influential, but in our ability and our commitment to being the servant of humankind. We are to be at the service of the little ones – like Jesus, bearing the sufferings and the infirmities of humankind. We are to alleviate the suffering of the multitudes and restore peace and hope in their hearts.”

The Eucharist that we celebrate today is a sharing in the Body and Blood of Jesus that was broken and shed for us upon the Cross.

May it empower us to precisely follow Jesus into a life of humble, loving, selfless and even suffering service, as the way to the fullness of life in Christ.

So remember: the Son of man came to serve, not to be served, and to give his life as a ransom for many. May that apply to us as well and may God bless us all.