

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Mark 10: 35-45

On one occasion during the American Revolutionary War, preparations were being made for an up-coming battle. A man dressed in civilian clothes passed a Corporal who was screaming orders at his men.

Seeing that they were obviously exhausted from their work, the man asked the Corporal, "Why don't you help them?" "Sir," the corporal said rather angrily, "I am a *Corporal!*"

With a quick apology, the stranger took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves and set to work with the soldiers.

"Mr. Corporal, Sir," he said when the task was completed, "whenever you need someone to help with a job, feel free to call on your Commander-in-chief. I will be happy to be of service."

And with that, George Washington put on his coat and left. President Washington understood today's gospel teaching that those who aspire to greatness or first rank among others, must serve the needs of all.

Jesus says, "Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant."

We are all familiar with the saying, "It is more blest to give than to receive." Today though I'd like to suggest a variation on that saying, "It **IS** blest to give, but there is a great deal of prudence in knowing how to receive."

Now, you may be saying, "Wait a minute, haven't we been told in so many ways the importance of serving and giving to others?"

The Jesuit Father Avery Dulles in his book "Models of the Church" tells of one of the more attractive models of the Church being that of Servant.

Pope Benedict declared a Year of Faith, which recognized the 50th Anniversary of Vatican II. This Council, and its increased emphasis on the ministry of the baptized has done a great deal to make us aware of the need to be a people of service. Now all of sudden we are talking about "receiving." What gives (pardon the pun)?

Well a story may help. One day while visiting the sick at the hospital I made one of my regular visits to a lady who was suffering greatly and had just recently lost her husband to an illness.

As I was preparing to leave, she said, "Father I want you to know that I pray for you every day. I also pray for the nurses and doctors. It's my way of helping others." This woman who couldn't leave her bed wanted to serve others. She did not want to just receive.

But you see, in order to let others be of service we must **ALLOW** them to help, to serve, to give. We need to learn how to receive with graciousness.

The Gospels record that Jesus allowed people to minister to Him. Jesus ate at their homes. He allowed Mary, the sister of Martha to anoint his body for burial. He asked the Samaritan woman at the well for a drink of water.

Jesus was not above letting others serve His needs. Good ministry, you see, is the balance of giving **AND** receiving, of serving **AND** being served.

We do not have to be in control all the time. We can allow others to take the lead. Now the world may judge this as a weakness to our humanity but remember that Jesus took on our humanity.

He allowed others to minister to Him. He knew how to receive. Blest are we if we do the same. Sometimes it is more blessed to receive and let others serve.

Today, challenge yourself by asking what you are doing to **serve** the needs of others. How are you sharing the gifts God has given you to use?

Remember what Jesus said, "Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant."

AMEN!