

Readings Isaiah 53: 10-11; Hebrews 4: 14-16; Mark 10: 35-45



Fr Michael says:

Authority as Service

The theme of Jesus' life can be summed up in one word – service! His responsiveness to His Father and His desire to bring His life and love to us all are the means that He fulfils this glorious Mission. In Isaiah, we see how this is fulfilled, His sufferings for us and His being the source of blessing for us all too! This approach is in sharp distinction to the response of the disciples, who are totally taken up with human glory, power and honour! How different must their attitude be, Jesus tells them, He who came “to serve and give His life for many.” Hebrews gives us the confidence to approach Jesus, as He knows us through and through, our qualities and failings!

At the washing of the feet, Jesus says “If I, the Master, has washed your feet, you must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example, so that you may copy what I have done.” (John 13/14 – 15) In our Society we are seeing a widening gulf between the haves and the have nots; the distances grow bigger as the feelings of being unappreciated and undervalued grow – even those who have started in such situations can forget from where they came! A good parent remembers what it was like to be a child. Sometimes this role reversal is quite stimulating and challenging – there have been several films made on this theme, showing that it led to a more caring and sensitive exercise of authority. The opposite role reversal can also happen, in the lack of understanding of what the one higher up is trying to do and so leading to quite severe criticism.

A fairy story is told of a watch that was crossing the town square, as the clock on the Church tower sounded the hour. The watch looked up at the clock and said: “You think you are better than the rest of us, don't you? You ought to take a look at yourself. Your face is so common, your hands so clumsy and your voice so hoarse.” The clock replied: “Come up here, my little brother and I'll show you something.” The watch did as he was told and came up and looked around and saw the wonderful view, but also realised how dangerous it could be, so exposed and so lonely. “Little brother, there is a man down there who wants to know the time – why don't you tell him?” said the clock. “I couldn't make myself heard from up here and he could not see me either!” the watch replied. “So you can't tell him, but I can. We each have a job to do; I can do what you can't do. You can do what I can't do. So don't lets criticise each other, let each of us in our own way and from our own place, tell people the time. In that way we are equal and can even be brothers!” Jesus has abolished the distance between master and servant – the two have become one!

Beware how we live our lives, self-seeking can make us grasping, cold hearted, selfish: it is only by giving that we receive and it is in serving that we grow in love.