



Bringing Home the Word

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
January 15, 2023

Proud Servants of God

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

“My servant” is an identification a lot of people will shy away from. A servant seeks to accomplish someone else’s goals, and the adjective “my” suggests belonging to another. Yet all of today’s readings describe individuals who are proud to be servants—servants of God. What makes this kind of servant something to which all of us can aspire?

As a servant of God, Isaiah became “a light to the nations that [God’s] salvation may reach to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). As a servant of God, Paul became “an apostle of Christ Jesus,” proclaiming the good news of God’s love “to the church of God that is in Corinth.”

As a servant of God, John the Baptist prepared the way so that Jesus “might be made known to Israel” (John 1:31). These servants sought to accomplish God’s goals for the fulfillment of others. It is in such commitment to others that we ourselves are fulfilled. Ask any parent, spouse, or good friend if this is not the case.

We might not want to be the servant of another, but what a privilege it is to be called to be a servant of God, a light to others, to proclaim God’s love and make Jesus known. By our baptism, we have all been so called. We enlighten others by the way we live with integrity. The unselfishness of our lives proclaims the good news of Christ Jesus. Authentic Christian living makes him known to the world. That’s what it means to be a servant of God. +

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 49:3, 5–6

I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

1 Corinthians 1:1–3

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God....

John 1:29–34

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

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to be called
to be a servant of God,
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A Word from Pope Francis

John saw something shocking: the beloved Son of God in solidarity with sinners; and the Holy Spirit made him understand the unprecedented novelty... While in all religions it is man who offers and sacrifices something to God...[it] is God who offers his own Son for the salvation of humanity.

Angelus, Rome, January 19, 2020



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How do you personally benefit by serving others?
- Are you careful to take care of your own needs even as you serve others?

Care for the Caregiver

By Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR

A counselor told his gloomy new patient, “Lighten up! You need a good laugh. Go to the circus and enjoy a performance by Giggles the Clown.” Replied the patient, “I am Giggles the Clown.”

According to an article in *Time* last August, suicides in this country are at their highest number in thirty years. Sixteen million people in the US are affected by clinical depression, making it “the leading cause of disability in the world, costing the US economy alone \$210 billion a year in lost productivity [and] missed days of work.”

More surprising than melancholic clowns are members of the cloth with clinical depression. A study by the Clergy Health Initiative at Duke Divinity School says Methodist ministers were twice as likely to be depressed than the general public. Mental health specialists cite guilt about not doing enough, doubts about one’s call to ministry, and “vicarious trauma” as possible factors. “Bearing witness to another person’s trauma can itself be traumatic and can activate feelings and behaviors associated with earlier traumatic experiences clergy may have had in their own lives,” according to a study published in *MentalHealth.org*. It asserts that vicarious trauma affects clergy as it does professional caregivers and first responders.

However, a growing number of people today assume the role of caregiver, not as a profession but as a responsibility to a family member or friend who is sick,



elderly, disabled, or dying. In a 2015 report, “Caregiving in the US,” 39 percent of adults are caregivers, and of these, sixty percent are women. Nearly half of caregivers assist a parent or parent-in-law; one in ten care for a spouse. Round-the-clock caregivers are more likely to experience stress in their duties, which can also lead to secondary traumatic stress (STS) or “compassion fatigue.” Symptoms include mental and physical exhaustion, numbness in interacting with others, and difficulty in finding fulfillment in work.

Compassion literally means “to suffer together.” Jesus was moved with compassion, but he also withdrew to pray and rest with his disciples. He told them: “Come away by yourselves to a deserted

place and rest a while. People were coming and going...and they had no opportunity even to eat” (Mark 6:31)

So a message to caregivers—professional or otherwise—on the verge of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma: Take care of yourself as you care for others. This isn’t selfishness, but prudence. It’s hard to give what you don’t have. For this reason, Mother Teresa required her sisters to take a mandatory year off from their caregiving duties every four to five years. In F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Absolution*, the priest, teetering on a nervous breakdown, tells the kid who is trying to make a confession: Go to an amusement park but don’t get up close, “because if you do, you’ll only feel the heat and the sweat and the life.”

Lighten your load, caregivers! Go to the circus, amusement park, movies—or chapel—wherever numbness can be prevented in you. For it’s in feeling the heat, the sweat, and the life that the Way, the Truth, and the Life is found! +

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Creator God, help us to find holy balance as we seek to attend to others and take care of ourselves. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 16–21

Monday, Weekday:

Heb 5:1–10 / Mk 2:18–22

Tuesday, St. Anthony:

Heb 6:10–20 / Mk 2:23–28

Wednesday, Weekday:

Heb 7:1–3, 15–17 / Mk 3:1–6

Thursday, Weekday:

Heb 7:25—8:6 / Mk 3:7–12

Friday, Weekday:

Heb 8:6–13 / Mk 3:13–19

Saturday, St. Agnes:

Heb 9:2–3, 11–14 / Mk 3:20–21

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