

## **“Jesus Came Not to be Served but to Serve” : 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost**

James and John were two opportunists. Their one aim in life was to rise in the ranks. To achieve this they did not hesitate to beg. They did not mind how much envy and resentment they arose in their fellow disciples. Their aim was to scramble up the career ladder: but what price to themselves? Whatever they do or achieve will be worthless. Power and status, if wrongly applied, can harden the heart. A hard-hearted person is incapable of love. It is by giving that we receive, and it is by serving that we grow in love.

People seek authority for different reasons. There are those who like the power it gives them to lord it over others. In today's world the lust for power is expressed more in competitiveness. The goals are to get on, to advance to be the biggest and the best. Sadly, many individuals discover that the height of their success is where they begin to feel such pressure at work that strains are put on their home and family life, and on personal health.

Jesus was opposed to that lust for power. He said, “Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant.” His words were backed up by his living example. Anyone who wants to follow the way of Christ must enter into the mind and attitude of Christ the Servant.

You may ask ‘How can I do that’?

There have been many books written telling us how to serve the wider community, to have no preconceived ideas of what the local unmet needs might be, and, if practicable, how they might be responded to. Go out to listen, to learn and endeavour to walk alongside people. This is a hard call. This approach involves entering into ongoing dialogue with the community. It is the discipleship approach – it is the way of the Cross. Jesus developed an authentic heart-to-heart connection with people. The bridges he built carried two-way traffic: exchange of pain, hurt, anguish, disappointment, joy, expectancy.

The story of the woman of Samaria is a classic example of how Jesus built bridges with people and encouraged them to share their needs. When the woman arrived at the well where Jesus was resting, she was intent solely on discussing such mundane duties as drawing water. However, Jesus kept trying to make it a more meaningful discussion. She tried to engage Jesus on the difference in belief and worship between the Jews and Samaritans.

Jesus side-stepped the debate, and moved the conversation forward to a genuine meeting of their souls. She told him her heart-break, and he made her heart-break his own.

Like Jesus, we need to build bridges that give people the opportunity to meet us half-way, share their heart-breaks and meet each others' needs.

The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life a ransom for all. Amen.

Fr Jim McKenna