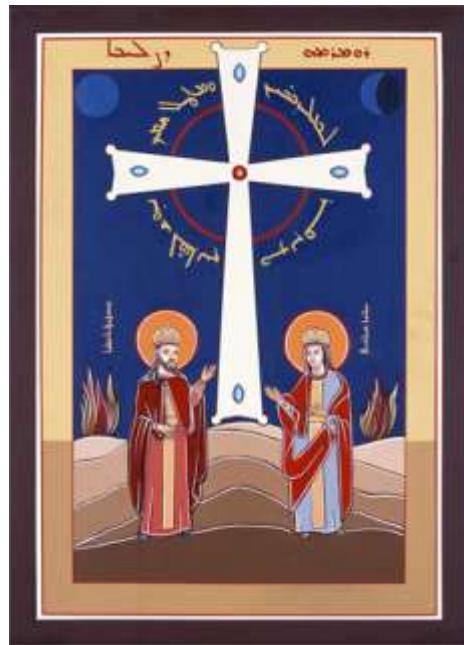


Why do we Serve?



For many reasons! And unfortunately, the majority of the time not for the right ones.

Yes, our service is not always innocent and selfless; it is many times conditioned and dependent on what we are going to get back.

We serve our Church too in the same way, for positions, titles, to be seen and acknowledged, to do business with others and benefit from them, to have the priest on one side against the other and on and on.

This is what had happened with James and John, the sons of Zebedee.

They were helping Jesus in his ministry not for the right reason and thanks to their request, that revealed their real intention: “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.”

They arrived at the point of saying it openly. What they are asking for becomes as if is their right. Why? Because from the beginning their motive in serving was not right. They were running a business in their service. Unconsciously they were waiting for a reward and when Jesus

foretold them about his death and resurrection, they found it as the best time to ask him for it.

This was at the end of Jesus' life. For three years, Jesus was showing them the best way to serve unconditionally. In all the miracles that Jesus performed, He didn't ask for anything in return. Only what he asked others for was, what they need him to do for them, to not invade their privacy. All His questions to people were to give and not to take. Even in his giving He was so professional and expert. Sadly, we are bad in both, in giving and in taking.

I liked Jesus' answer to James and John: "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

He is telling them about the persecution that they are going to encounter after his death and in founding his Church, but the surprise is that He didn't mention the reward. At the same time, we see that He didn't identify precisely who are going to be at his right and left, since it is not their right to know here in their life on earth about that, also to not fall in the sin of pride, the one that they are already struggling with. Adding to that, it is not reasonable for the God of justice to show favoritism. If he will tell them, He will create conflict and division amid them.

Jesus is mentioning something so important here: nobody knows what his place will be up there. Our actions don't save us because only God knows our inner motives in doing any charitable service.

The same situation that happened with these two disciples long time ago is happening nowadays in our churches and communities: jealousy, pride, quarrel and conflicts for positions and places of honor...

This demand caused anger to the other ten apostles. They are right to be mad, but their reaction also reveals wrong reason in doing their services too. Because our service should not be dependent on others. We have to

serve peacefully despite what other's intentions are and we should not let other's intentions and attitudes bother us.

Is this not what Jesus does? All the religious leaders and their followers were against what He was doing but this didn't stop him.

The opposite happened - he didn't stop his mission, he drank the bitter cup to the end, to the cross where he showed everybody that nothing can stop him not even death. He died the worst death at the Roman time, by crucifixion.

In his second letter to Timothy, Saint Paul writes: "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David, that is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained."

Jesus was chained but his word was not! Don't think that in hurting others you are going to win. The world can kill as many people, standing for the truth, as it chooses, but it cannot kill the Truth.

Saint Paul gives to Timothy, 4 characteristics to be a good servant:

We extract them from his words:

- 1) "Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus": (patience)
- 2) "No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs": (focus)
- 3) "The soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer": (follow one leader)
- 4) "And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules": (follow the rules, No shortcuts)
- 5) "It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops": (enjoy, stand for your rights)

The community that has a lot of problems is a community that have a lot of leaders and few of servers.

What kind of community are we? Of servers or of leaders!

“For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Rev. Father Rami Razzouk