

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, September 19, 2021
25th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle B

A prestigious school of theology was seeking a new president. Over one hundred candidates applied for the position. The search committee narrowed the list to five eminently qualified persons. Then somebody came up with a brilliant idea: "Let's send a person to the institutions where each of the five finalists is currently employed, and let's interview the janitor at each place, asking him what he thinks of the man seeking to be our president".

Somebody on that search committee understood, in a flash of genius, that those who live close to Christ become so secure in his love that they no longer relate to other people according to rank or power or money or prestige or social status. They treat janitors and presidents with equal dignity. They treat everybody as a VIP.

Today's Gospel passage says something that is not complimentary on the disciples: "They did not understand". This statement is descriptive of humankind. When confronted with true greatness, we simply do not understand it – we do not see it. Jesus continues to explain to his disciples the nature of his mission – telling them: "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death the Son of Man will rise". He lays out the whole plan before them: the crucifixion and the resurrection. They should be curious. They should ask questions. They should see the significance. But the best they can muster up at this crucial moment is a blank stare and confused silence. They cannot understand it because it does not meet what they think is the measure of greatness.

My dear friends, how do we grow to the point that we stop measuring people by their ranks and positions, by their successes and accomplishments, and start regarding people for their service and for the sacrifices? How do we move from a world's model which measures value in terms of wealth and possessions, power and influence, fame and popularity, to a model which measures value based on Jesus' teachings? When do we begin to think as God does and not as humans do?

True greatness is never about self-promotion. In our Gospel today, Jesus was walking with his disciples and as they walked, they talked among themselves. At the time they did not realize that he overheard them, but he clearly did for when they had arrived at their destination, he questioned them about it. The topic was “who is the greatest among them”. When Jesus asked them what they were arguing about on the way, they were embarrassed. It was at this point that Jesus told them and all of us, what it is that makes for true greatness in the eyes of God.

“If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all”. Again, true greatness is never about self-promotion. True greatness is found in service. It is all about servanthood. You will recognize greatness when you look for it in the humble acts of love shown everyday by people who are not interested in self-promotion.

Someone once asked Dr. Albert Schweitzer who was the greatest person in the modern world. He answered, “Some unknown person, who is doing the work of love”.

Amen