



## ***31<sup>st</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME*** ***YEAR A – November 5, 2017***

There is a story told about a group of African missionaries who were sent to work in a diocese in Zambia. On arrival they discovered that almost all the missionaries in that diocese were Americans. The American missionaries called the African bishop by his first name. They did not use titles.

The newly arrived African missionaries thought that this was inappropriate, even scandalous, and they decided to change it. They taught the people to call the bishop “My Lord.” This was new to the people but they were ready and willing to learn.

One day, a woman came to see the bishop just before noon and the person she met at the door was one of the American priests. She asked him, “Where is *Our Lord*?” to which the priestly gleefully replied, “Our Lord is in heaven - the one who thinks he's our Lord is still sleeping.”

You can find a rather long essay on the subject of “*titles in the Catholic Church*” on the internet at “*How to address Priests and Religious – Titles and Signs of Respect*” by Marian Therese Horvat, Ph.D. How do you feel about titles?

I don't think the titles are intended to ignore the message in the Gospel today but there is always the danger of “*entitlement*”. If the title is self-serving for the man, it becomes the title of a hypocrite. Jesus has a lot to say about hypocrisy (Matthew 23:27).

Jesus reminds us today that the greatest among us must be our servants. Pope Francis had an interesting comment about “titles” for clergy. He said, “When you go into a restaurant, you don't say to the waiter, “Your Eminence, bring me a glass of water.” He reminds all priests and those of higher rank, that they are servants. Jesus did not refer to himself as “king”, he came to serve and he did.

In the first reading today (Malachi 1:14B-2:2B, 8-10) God reminds the priests of the Old Testament that He expects them to be servants too. If they did not listen, the consequences were severe. They were cursed by God Himself - (Malachi 1:14B-2:2B, 8-10).

St. Paul in our second reading (I Thessalonians: 2:7B-9, 13) tells us how he himself fulfilled the role of servant for the people of God. He says, “...*we were determined to share with you our very selves...*”. Giving oneself to others is the highest form of service. It is the very definition of love (ἀγάπη).

The *service role* of the apostles and the priests of the Old Testament is our role too. It may not be our job to die for our faith as some of them did, but it is our job to live it every day. We are not all called to be priests but we are all called to serve.

We are all called to be saints.



**HOW DO YOU SERVE**