**READINGS:** Isaiah 53:10-11 / Heb. 4:14-16 / Mark 10:35-45
**Theme:** Seek First Service, Not Honour
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

A few years ago, in one of the European countries, a woman who was given the national best worker award was later stripped of the honour. Why? Because, she actually didn’t deserved it, as she didn’t even show up for work half of that year. And a further enquiry into the matter revealed that the three top members of the award’s panel of judges were her relations. Certainly this woman sought honour first and not service first, and eventually lost the honour.

Similarly in today’s gospel reading, the two sons of Zebedee (James and John) sought honour first – to sit at the right and left hands of the Lord in his kingdom – without first engaging themselves in the service that might bring them that honour. Jesus, however, took the occasion to teach that we should seek first service, not honour: ‘You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be the first among you must be a slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’

Service, beloved, entails a lot, but limiting myself to the gospel reading, let me pick out only two of its ingredients: humility and sacrifice.

Service entails humility; that is why the Lord said: ‘whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be the first among you must be a slave of all.’ And what follows humility? Honour, of course! This is very clear in the Book of Proverbs: ‘before honour is humility’ (Proverbs 15:13). And Jesus himself says: ‘anyone who humbles him/herself will be exalted [honoured]’ (Luke 14:11).

Secondly, service entails sacrifice; that is why in giving himself as an example for emulation, Jesus did not simply say: ‘the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve’; for he quickly added: ‘and to give his life as a ransom for many.’ And certainly, any sacrifice pleasing to the Lord is rewarded plentifully. That is why last Sunday’s gospel reading reminded us that Jesus promises a hundredfold of blessing for the sacrifices we make for his sake (Mark 10:29-30).

Beloved, in our families, churches, workplaces, schools or communities, let us not only wait for the opportunity to serve, but let us look for the opportunity to serve. Furthermore, let us do so with humility and cheerfully offer the sacrifice which that service may require, conscious that it is the Lord we serve. Happily, the Lord whom we service sees everything; he doesn’t need a panel of human assessors (who may be bias as in the case mentioned in the introduction) to assist him to appraise our performance. Beloved, he who sees all our small and great services will honour us eternally. Amen!