

Going Down to the Heights of Service

by Bert Miranda

The first time I heard of the term “servant of the Lord,” I didn’t immediately understand what it meant. I thought priests, nuns and brothers from religious congregations were the only ones who could be called servants of the Lord. I considered the laity involved in Church work as people who were only helping the clergy.

But one day, I realized that whatever the laity did to help the clergy and the Church was service to God Himself. When this dawned on me, I began to value every bit of responsibility I had. Whether it was big or small, whether I was noticed or not, whether I received praise or not -- I did everything as a service for God.

In Mark 10:42-45, Jesus realigned the ambitions of James and John when He revealed the true secret to greatness. The two approached Jesus to request for the place at His right and left when He entered into His reign. This was Jesus’ reply:

“You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant. Whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to serve but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

So being a servant of the Lord is a high calling that requires us to go down to the lowliest place of being a slave to all. Of course, it won’t happen overnight. It’s a process. A gradual but steady growth in holiness is what we need to aspire for. What’s exciting is when a person grows in holiness, he will notice a package of virtues that will more and more manifest in his service to God and fellowmen.

There are many attitudes we need to cultivate to be a servant of the Lord. Here I will just mention four of them.

1. Be available to serve in any way.

I’ve met a few people who came to serve the Lord wanting to be leaders. They came insisting on their own way and preferred to be on top. Boy, that’s a hindrance to serving the Lord effectively.

When we come to serve Him, we must allow Him to choose what He wants us to do, following His own timetable. St Paul gives us wise advice in 2 Corinthians 10:18: *“For it is not the one who recommends himself who is approved but the one whom the Lord recommends.”*

So instead of dictating where and how we want to be of use to God, we should say, “Lord, I’m here. I’m available. I want to be of service to You. Where do You want to put me?” Of course, you can also approach your spiritual elders and ask, “Is there anything that I could be of help to in this ministry?”

In the meantime, the greatest service anyone can do for the Lord is to be a good witness for Him.

There's so much to do in making the Gospel known and God is always in search of people who can help in this work. As you wholeheartedly offer yourself to God in service, opportunities will present themselves to you.

2. Be joyful wherever God calls you to serve.

In 1990, our charismatic community was asked to give a presentation at the Worldwide Retreat for Priests in Rome. The day after we arrived, some of us men were asked to report to the registration office for an assignment. All of us came dressed in coats and ties ready to serve the Lord.

It turned out that we were assigned to unload the baggage of busloads of priests who arrived from all over the world. We ended up removing our coats and doing the work of the porters — something we didn't expect we'd be doing.

It didn't end there. A few days later, we were asked to mop the floor of the retreat hall and clean the men's comfort room. With over 5,000 priests present, you can imagine the kind of work we had to do!

But we did it with all our hearts. And the Lord gave us His joy. We didn't grumble and, instead, thanked God for His grace. As a bonus, He even blessed us with a successful presentation at the retreat.

So if God calls you to serve Him to do a job — a menial or otherwise — be joyful. Your joy can be contaminating and the radiance on your face can encourage other people as you do your work for Him. Without your knowledge, you may be ministering to other people as you serve the Lord wholeheartedly.

3. Render quality service.

Some people desire to serve the Lord but they don't give their best. They serve without initiative and have to be told all the details of their task before they act. As a servant, you should have the initiative to pray about your assignment and ask the Lord what to do. You can even give suggestions to your ministry head if the Lord inspires you with a better way to perform your task.

For example, you serve in the audio ministry as the one who carries all the equipment for your prayer meeting. Then you notice that the keyboards are transported without the proper protection. So maybe you can suggest covering it with plastic or making a box for it. If you always give your best in whatever you do, even if nobody notices what you do, God will raise you up.

4. Do everything with love.

There are times when I get physically exhausted from service. I don't even count how many times a week I travel. I go to Bohol, Dumaguete, sometimes Cagayan de Oro, Davao and a few other places in the Philippines. But I always pray, "Lord, thank You for giving me the opportunity to serve."

Sometimes, we get caught up with our own concerns and forget that others' needs are greater than our own. When I remember that, I say, "Yes, Lord, this is nothing compared to many people who are

suffering right now. I make myself available to help others.”

We must pray that our service will be motivated by love. If we will serve the Lord on our own strength, forget it. We need God’s grace. First Corinthians 13:1-3 should be a great inspiration for us as we serve the Lord and others:

If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

There’s so much blessing in serving God. It may not be easy or convenient all the time, but His grace will always be sufficient to make us committed to do our responsibilities with quality. Serve the Lord faithfully and you will not want for your reward. Remember what Jesus said?

“Who, then is the faithful and prudent servant, whom the master has put in charge of his household to distribute to them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant when his master on his arrival finds doing so. Amen, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property.” (Matthew 25:45-47)

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