



The Holy See

HOLY MASS AND CANONIZATION OF THE BLESSED:
MANUEL RUIZ LÓPEZ AND HIS SEVEN COMPANIONS, FRANCESCO, MOOTI AND
RAFFAELE MASSABKI,
GIUSEPPE ALLAMANO, MARIE-LÉONIE PARADIS AND ELENA GUERRA

PAPAL MASS

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

Saint Peter's Square

XXIX Sunday in Ordinary Time, 20 October 2024

[Multimedia]

Jesus asks James and John: “What is it you want me to do for you?” (*Mk 10:36*). Immediately afterwards he presses them: “Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” (*Mk 10:38*). Jesus poses questions and, in doing so, helps us to discern, because questions allow us to discover what is within us, casting light on our hearts’ desires, even those of which we are unaware.

Let us allow the word of the Lord to question us. Let us imagine that he is asking each one of us: “What is it you want me to do for you?”; and the second question: “Are you able to drink my cup?”.

Through these questions, Jesus reveals the ties between him and the disciples, as well as their expectations of him, with all the aspects typical of any relationship. James and John are indeed connected to Jesus, but they also have certain demands. They express the desire to be near him, but only in order to occupy a place of honour, to play an important role, “to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory” (*Mk 10:37*). They obviously think of Jesus as the Messiah, a victorious and glorious Messiah, and expect him to share his glory with them. They see in Jesus the Messiah, but regard him with the category of power.

Jesus does not stop at the disciples' words, but delves deeper, listening to and reading the hearts of each of them and also each one of us. Then, in the exchange, through two questions, he tries to reveal the desire within their requests. Sometimes also in the Church we see these ideas about honour or power.

First, he asks: "What is it you want me to do for you?", a question that reveals the thoughts of their hearts, bringing to light the hidden expectations and dreams of glory that the disciples secretly cultivate. It is as if Jesus asks: "Who do you want me to be for you?". In this way, he unmasks their real desire: for a powerful and victorious Messiah who will give them a place of honour.

With his second question, Jesus refutes this image of a Messiah and so helps them to change their perspective, that is to be converted: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Thus, he reveals that he is not the Messiah that they think; he is the God of love, who stoops down to reach the one who has sunk low; who makes himself weak to raise up the weak, who works for peace and not for war, who has come to serve and not to be served. The cup that the Lord will drink is the offering of his life, given to us out of love, even unto death, and death on a cross.

Moreover, on his right and on his left there will be two thieves, hanging like him on the cross and not seated on thrones of power; two thieves nailed with Christ in pain, not enthroned in glory. The crucified king, the just man condemned becomes the slave of all: truly this man is God's Son! (cf. *Mk 15:39*). Those who dominate do not win, only those who serve out of love. We were also reminded of this in the Letter to the Hebrews: "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are" (*Heb 4:15*).

At this point, Jesus can help his disciples to convert, to change their mindset: "You know that among the gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them" (*Mk 10:42*). But it must not be that way for those who follow God, who made himself a servant to reach everyone with his love. Those who follow Christ, if they wish to be great, must serve by learning from him.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus reveals the thoughts, desires and projections of our hearts, unmasking at times our expectations of glory, domination, power, and vanity. He helps us to think no longer according to the world's criteria, but according to the way of God, who becomes last so that the last may be lifted up and become first. While these questions of Jesus, with his teaching on service, are often incomprehensible to us as they were to the disciples, yet by following him, by walking in his footsteps and welcoming the gift of his love that transforms our way of thinking, we too can learn God's way of *service*. Let us not forget the three words that show God's style of serving: closeness, compassion and tenderness. God draws near, becomes compassionate, and is tender in order to serve. Closeness, compassion and tenderness.

This is what we should yearn for: not power, but service. Service is the Christian way of life. It is not about a list of things to do, so that once done, we can consider our part completed; those who serve with love do not say: “now it’s someone else’s turn”. This is how employees think, not witnesses. Service is born from love, and love knows no bounds, it makes no calculations, it spends and it gives. It does not just do things to bring about results, it is not occasional service, but it is something that is born from the heart, a heart renewed by love and in love.

When we learn to serve, our every gesture of attention and care, every expression of tenderness, every work of mercy becomes a reflection of God’s love. So in this way, let all of us – each one of us – continue Jesus’ work in the world.

In light of this, we can remember the disciples of the Gospel who are being canonized today. Throughout the troubled history of humanity, they remained faithful servants, men and women who served in martyrdom and in joy, like Father Manuel Ruiz López and his companions. They are priests and religious fervent with missionary zeal, like Father Joseph Allamano, Sister Marie Leonie Paradis and Sister Elena Guerra. These new saints lived Jesus’ way: service. The faith and the apostolate they carried out did not feed their worldly desires and hunger for power but, on the contrary, they made themselves servants of their brothers and sisters, creative in doing the good, steadfast in difficulties and generous to the end.

We confidently ask their intercession so that we too can follow Christ, follow him in service and become witnesses of hope for the world.