

# THE VOCATION TO SERVE CHRIST

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## SERVE CHRIST THE LORD

(Colossians 3:24)

### SERVING CHRIST IS A PRIVILEGE

One Friday evening, at the Evangelical Church of Le Havre, on Franklin Street, it was the Bible study meeting. Pastor Ove Falg, of Danish origin, was preparing the coal stove. It was winter, it was cold. He had coal, wood and paper, but no matches. I immediately offered to go and get some. I ran to the nearest store to buy a box of matches. That night, bringing those matches to the pastor, doing him this service, was, in my naive and pure teenage faith, SERVING CHRIST. My heart was filled with joy.

Yes, everything we do to participate in God's work and help our neighbor is really serving Christ. The apostle Paul confirms this with this exhortation which should be the guiding principle of our Christian conduct:

"Whatever you do, do it WITH A GOOD HEART, as FOR THE LORD, and not for men." (Colossians 2:23)

Didn't Christ say about helping the hungry and the imprisoned? "Whenever you did these things to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did them to ME." (Matthew 25:40)

There are many ways and opportunities to serve Jesus Christ. There are so many things to do, so many services to render, so many good words to say, so many opportunities to witness, that everyone can effectively serve Christ.

**The followers of Jesus Christ are all called to be actors, that is, "servants" and "handmaids."  
There are no extras in the Church of Jesus Christ.**

All Christians have a calling to serve Jesus Christ. However, some receive a special calling, for a service called "ministry."

To all, Jesus says:

"If anyone SERVES ME, let him follow me." (John 12:26)

SERVING and FOLLOWING Christ are two inseparable actions. It implies a permanent availability. It is not necessary to audibly hear his voice in order to serve him. The Word of God exhorts us unequivocally to "SERVE HIM"; it is the Vocation of all of us:

### **"SERVE THE LORD"**

(Romans 12:11)

### **"SERVE CHRIST THE LORD" (Colossians 3:24)**

This order "SERVE" should not be interpreted as a burdensome duty. On the contrary, serving Christ is a grace. To be in the service of the KING OF KINGS, the LORD OF LORDS, OUR SAVIOR, THE MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE, what an immense privilege!

## **THE MASTER**

When the apostles addressed Jesus, they always called him "MASTER."

Once two brothers, James and John, came to him and said, "MASTER, we would like you to do for us what we ask of you." (Mark 10:35)

They wanted the favor of sitting one on his right and the other on his left, up there in glory. They claimed the places of honor, which outraged the other apostles. Jesus then taught them this lesson:

"Whoever wants to be great among you, let him be your servant." (Mark 10:43)

Then he made an example of himself, saying:

"The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

Although he is the MASTER, he served man by giving his life to save him, to deliver him from the bondage of sin, from condemnation.

He took "the form of a SERVANT." (Philippians 2:7; Isaiah 53:12)

He cannot be compared to the masters of this world, tyrants and dominators.

Jesus is a Master who is "MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART" in spite of his immense greatness and infinite power. (Matthew 11:28)

In one of his speeches to the Jewish people, the apostle Peter presented the Master as the SERVANT OF GOD:

"The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified HIS SERVANT JESUS, whom you handed over and denied before Pilate..." (Acts 3:13)

Praying all together, after being persecuted, the apostles said to God, "Against your HOLY SERVANT JESUS, Herod and Pontius Pilate have joined forces...." (Acts 4:27)

How can we not be thankful and serve with joy this Master who thus lowered himself to save us from our state of perdition, paying by the gift of his life on the cross the redemption of our soul.

Many years ago, a trader was sailing the Mediterranean Sea aboard a Turkish ship. This was during the time of slavery. He met a slave belonging to the captain. This man interested him. He resolved to buy him back. He offered the master a certain amount of money which was accepted. The slave, believing that he was going to change one servitude for another, became violently angry; but the trader turned to him with kindness and said: "My friend, you are free, you can now go wherever you want. You are free." The poor man, surprised, calmed down at once. He threw himself crying at the feet of his liberator, saying, "You have conquered my heart, I am yours forever."

Like that redeemed slave, we said to Jesus Christ our Savior, "I give you my heart." We have clung to him. (1 Corinthians 6:17) We have voluntarily placed ourselves in his service. That is why the Word of God says:

"You are not your own, for YOU HAVE BEEN REDEEMED AT A GREAT PRICE. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit WHICH BELONG TO GOD." (1 Corinthians 6:20)

To serve the Master well, we must love him, and "we love him because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

Dr. MOFFAT, a famous missionary, tells of a time when he and his companions were tired, hungry and thirsty when they arrived in a pagan village. They asked for water. They were refused. They wanted to buy milk. No one would sell them any. They had to go to bed without eating or drinking. In the evening, at dusk, a woman came to them. She carried a bundle of wood on her head and a jar of milk in her hand. She put down the milk and wood and disappeared. Soon after, she returned with a leg of mutton and a bottle of water. She lit a fire without saying a word and cooked the meat. When questioned by missionary Moffat, she finally confessed that many years before she had heard a preacher preach the gospel and had opened her heart to the Lord. "I love," she said, "the one whose ministers you are, and I want to prove my love to him by doing good to you."

"But how," she was asked, "were you able to keep your faith in Jesus intact, alone, in this country plunged in such thick darkness?" She then pulled a worn-out New Testament from her pocket and replied, "This is the source from which I draw, this is the oil that keeps my lamp burning."

Jesus Christ does not treat his disciples as "slaves" who obey out of compulsion and fear of the whip. Even though he is the absolute Master, he establishes a friendly relationship between himself and his servants on the condition that the servants do what he tells them.

He expressed the dimension of his love with these words:

**"You are MY FRIENDS** if you do what I command you. I no longer call you servants, because the servant does not know what his Master is doing: but **I have called you FRIENDS** because I have made known to you all that I have learned from my Father." (John 15:14-15)

He reminded his disciples that the commitment to serve him must be total. "ONE IS YOUR MASTER, and you are all brothers." (Matthew 23:8)

"NO ONE CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS, for he will hate the one and love the other." (Mat. 6:24)

There is no compromise possible in His service.

"You call me TEACHER AND LORD," he said to them, "and you do well, for SO I AM." (John 13:13)

## **BEING A SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST: A NOBLE SERVICE**

The notion of servant is one of the most important facts in the Bible.

The word "servant" was once a synonym for slave in an environment where slavery reigned.

Whenever the apostle Paul referred to himself as a "servant" of God or of Jesus Christ, he used the Greek word "doulos" which means "slave." (Romans 1:1) : "Paul, bondservant (doulos) of Jesus Christ."

**The servant of Jesus Christ is not compared to a domestic servant. Serving Christ is not servitude.**

It is true that like the slave, the Christian is "property" of his Master Jesus Christ, who paid the price to redeem him. However, there is such an intimate spiritual relationship between the servant and Christ his Master that the word "serve" has a noble meaning. It is both a stooping and a mark of greatness. That is why the servant is proud and happy to be "a worker with God." (1 Corinthians 3:9)

Although the word "slave" is used to say that we were "slaves of sin" and that we have become "slaves of God," there is a chasm between these two forms of slavery.

The apostle Paul expresses this clearly when he writes this to the Christians in Rome:

- "Thanks be to God that, having been **slaves to sin**, YOU HAVE OBEYED FROM THE HEART the rule of doctrine in which you were instructed." (Romans 6:17)

Now, having been set free from sin and become **slaves of God**, you have for your fruit holiness and for your end eternal life." (Romans 6:17-22)

On the one hand, bondage, impurity, darkness; on the other hand, emancipation, the freedom of God's children, purity, light.

**What a joy to belong to Christ and to serve him!**

It is written:

" You have not received **a spirit of bondage** to be in fear again, but you have received **a spirit of adoption**, by which we cry out: Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15)

The apostle says in (1 Corinthians 4:1):

"Let us be regarded as **SERVANTS OF CHRIST.**"

He uses the Greek word "upêrétas" whose meaning refers to "a crewman under a boss or any man under another."

Thus the servant is both the sailor under the Captain and the disciple serving the Master.

## THE VOCATION OF THE APOSTLES

At the age of thirty, Jesus left Nazareth and came to live near the Lake of Galilee, in the town of Capernaum, of which only ruins remain today. There he had his home, his headquarters, from which he went on mission to the towns and villages.

"Jesus came to Capernaum. They heard that he was at home. The whole town was gathered before his door." (Mark 2:1; 1:33)

As he walked along the Sea of Galilee, he saw fishermen. Some were casting their nets into the sea, others were mending them in their boats. He called to each of them and said, "FOLLOW ME AND I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN." (Mark 1: 16-20)

Their names were: Peter, Andrew, James, John. Without hesitation, they left everything, family, work, and followed him to put themselves at his service. These four disciples were joined by many others, including Matthew the tax collector, who immediately stood up, resigning his post, as soon as he heard Christ say to him, "FOLLOW ME." (Mark 2:14)

He called these young men and hired them to accompany him on the roads of Israel to go from town to town and from village to village proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Then one day he went up a hill overlooking the Lake of Galilee with all the disciples who wanted to follow him. He chose twelve of them and "appointed them to be with him and to send them out to preach." (Mark 3:13-15)

These twelve disciples, called apostles, thus had the best possible training! What a wonderful Bible school it must have been to listen to the instructions of the most excellent teacher! They were always with him and he often took them aside. (Matthew 13:10, 36; 20:17) He explained his teaching more thoroughly to them than to others, promising that the Holy Spirit would remind them of all he had said. (John 14:26)

**To be with the Master at all times is the normal and blessed position of all who serve Christ who has made us this promise, "I am with you EVERY DAY."** (Matthew 28:20)

"Jesus sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick." (Luke 9:2; Matthew 10:7-8) Obeying their Master, "they left and went from village to village, preaching the good news and performing healings everywhere." (Luke 9:6)

As servants of Christ, the apostles were not only "preachers," they were available to perform any task necessary to help Christ.

- They rowed to get the Lord across the lake. (Mark 6:48; Luke 8:22)
- They put a small boat at his disposal. (Mark 3:9)
- They took care of buying food. (John 4:8)
- They were responsible for finding a place to stay.
- They prepared the Passover meal. (Mark 14:12)
- They brought a donkey for Jesus to ride on on Palm Sunday. (Luke 19:30)

- They distributed the multiplied loaves and fishes to the crowd, seating them in rows of 50 and 100, and then they collected the leftovers. (Matthew 15:29-38)
- They administered the money and took care of the poor. (John 12:5)

While Jesus was teaching and preaching, they were taking care of the material things.

But later, after the Lord's ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, as the number of disciples grew rapidly by the thousands, the apostles were overwhelmed with activity. They had to make a choice.

They called together the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not fitting that we should forsake the word of God and serve at tables. Therefore, choose from among you seven men, of whom a good testimony is given, who are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, and whom we shall appoint to this office. And we will continue to apply ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word." (Acts 6:2-4)

The apostles found themselves obliged to entrust social action to others or else they would not be able to fulfill the essential mission that Christ had entrusted to them, that is, "to preach the Gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:16)

From the beginning of the Church, a minimum of organization or distribution of services was outlined. It is very interesting to note in the original Greek text, the use of the same word "diacona," both for the material activity (serving at the tables), and for the spiritual activity (ministry of the Word). The words "serve" and "ministry" are identical words in the original text.

Are not those who serve at the tables and those who serve the Word in fact serving the same Master?

It is from the word "diaconos" that the word "deacon," which means "servant" or "handmaid" in the service of someone, comes.

**What is important, therefore, is not the task itself, but the privilege of having THE VOCATION TO SERVE CHRIST.**

## **THE PRIESTHOOD**

Addressing the Christians spread throughout the regions of a country that is now called Turkey (1 Peter 1:1), the apostle Peter wrote:

"As living stones, build yourselves up into A HOLY PRIESTHOOD..."

"You are a chosen race, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, a holy nation, a purchased people, that you may proclaim the virtues of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2 : 5, 9)

What does the word PRIESTHOOD mean?

It comes from a Latin word that refers to the dignity and functions of ministers of religion.

The original Greek word in our New Testament, translated priesthood, is "hierateuma." It should be translated "priesthood" or "priestly function." The word "priest" comes from the Greek "hiéreux" which means, "one who deals with sacred things, who presides over a cult." This word no longer has the

same meaning today as it did in biblical times. It is therefore necessary to go back in time to get an exact idea of this function.

Originally, the "priests" were members of the ancient tribe of Levi, charged with the religious functions described in the first books of the Bible, notably in Leviticus. In the book of Deuteronomy, it says this, "They teach Jacob the ordinances, they set the burnt offering on your altar." (Deuteronomy 33:10)

Their main activity was to teach the people the laws and ordinances of God. Those who were responsible for offering the sacrifices and offerings on the altars were called "priests." A priestly caste was formed at that time, separate from the people.

The coming of Jesus overturned these institutions. Moreover, he had to suffer from the clericalism of those Jewish priests who opposed him: "the chief priests and the Pharisees sent bailiffs to seize him." (John 7:32)

"The chief priests, the scribes and the leaders of the people sought to destroy him." (Luke 19:47; Matthew 12:14)

The word priest (sacrificer) is used in some versions of the Bible in place of the word priest.

**Jesus did not institute a new priesthood separate from the people. Indeed, the priesthood of the new covenant is THE VOCATION OF THE WHOLE PEOPLE.**

"CHRIST HAS MADE US PRIESTS FOR GOD HIS FATHER." (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6)

All Christians are therefore priests, that is, called to serve Jesus Christ, to collaborate in saving humanity for which Christ gave his life.

Jesus came as A HIGH PRIEST (archiereus: arch = great, hieruus = priest) of the goods to come. The first element (arch) means exactly: who is the head, who commands.

Jesus entered once and for all into the Most Holy Place with his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. (Hebrews 9:11-12)

"Therefore it is said of him, YOU ARE A PRIEST (hieruus) FOREVER." (Hebrews 5:6)

As a "priest," HE INTERCEDES FOR US. (Romans 8:34)

He has also made us intercessors and thus we form a universal priesthood.

The pages of the New Testament very often mention calls to prayer, to intercession:

"Pray to the Lord of the harvest" (Matthew 9:38)

"Pray for one another" (James 5:16)

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

"We must always pray" (Luke 18:1)

etc.

The apostle Paul said to the Christians of Thessalonica:

"You have been converted to God, forsaking idols, TO SERVE THE LIVING AND TRUE GOD." (1 Thess. 1:9)

## **CONVERTED TO SERVE is the goal of every Christian life!**

And, as the apostle Peter says:

"We form a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD to proclaim the virtues of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light."

If we are all called to the vocation of intercession and witness, it is obvious that within the framework of the priesthood, specific functions are entrusted to some. Among these functions are the Ministries.

## **THE MINISTERS OF JESUS CHRIST**

The apostle Paul, speaking of his apostolate, wrote to the Christians of Rome:

"The grace that God has given me to be A MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST among the Gentiles, discharging THE DIVINE SERVICE of the Gospel of God." (Romans 15:16)

About his companion Timothy, he says:

"We sent Timothy, our brother, A MINISTER OF GOD in the gospel of Christ." (1 Thessalonians. 3:2)

In these texts, the word "MINISTER" is the translation of the Greek word "leitourgos," which means to fulfill a public function, to do the service of the cult.

In the Bible, the MINISTER is most often referred to by the word "diaconos," the literal meaning of which is "one who runs through (dia) the dust (konia)." This refers to the one who runs through the dusty roads to carry the news.

We find again this word diaconos in the following texts:

"I was made A MINISTER (diaconos) according to the grace of God to proclaim to the Gentiles the incomprehensible riches of Christ." (Ephesians 3:7)

"He has enabled us to be MINISTERS (diaconos) of a new covenant." (2 Corinthians 3:6)

"You will be a good MINISTER (diaconos) of Jesus Christ, nurtured in the words of faith, in good conduct." (1 Timothy 4:6)

This word "MINISTER" is sometimes replaced by "SERVANT" but it means the same thing:

"We make ourselves commendable as SERVANTS (diaconos) OF GOD." (2 Corinthians 6:4)

MINISTERS OF JESUS CHRIST (Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 11:23; Colossians 1:7; 1 Timothy 4:6) MINISTER.

"They were serving the Lord in THEIR MINISTRY." (Acts 13:2)

Ministries have names corresponding to specific functions. A list of five different ministries is presented to us in Ephesians 4:11 :

"He (Jesus Christ) gave,  
some as APOSTLES,  
some as PROPHETS,  
some as EVANGELISTS,



some as PASTORS  
and TEACHERS."

## THE APOSTLES

In the Word of God there are no apostles who succeed Peter, but apostles LIKE Peter and WITH Peter.

Paul and Barnabas were not among the TWELVE who were WITH Jesus during his ministry. However, they are also called apostles:

"The apostles Barnabas and Paul..." (Acts 14:14)

It is the function that is important. The word apostle means "sent." These "sent ones" fulfilled their mission as pioneers: to proclaim the Good News, to found churches, to teach, to establish elders in those churches. The New Testament mentions what they did.

Our faith is based on the teaching of the apostles:

"You have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the cornerstone." (Ephesians 2:20)

What they taught, they received from the Lord as the apostle Paul says.

"I received from the Lord what I taught you." (1 Corinthians 11:23)

This foundation, this basic teaching is contained in the Bible. As it is written:

"The faith was handed down to the saints once for all." (Jude 3)

Since the first century, there have been many other men who have served as apostles. In some distant countries or among peoples, men were sent to evangelize, found churches, establish elders; their apostolate was accompanied by demonstrations of power as was the apostolate of the apostle Paul. Today, there can still be such ministries. However, the teaching cannot be different from that of the first apostles.

## THE PROPHETS

In the past, in the church of Antioch, there were **prophets**. (Acts 13:1)

While they were serving the Lord in their ministry and fasting, the Holy Spirit said through one of them:

"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13:2)

The prophets mentioned in the New Testament were servants with revelatory ability, such as Agabus who stood up and announced BY THE SPIRIT that there would be a great famine over the whole earth. It did indeed happen under Claudius (Roman emperor). (Acts 11:27-28)

Two other prophets are named: Jude and Silas. Their ministry was to exhort and strengthen the disciples with their messages. "Jude and Silas, who were prophets themselves, exhorted and strengthened them with many discourses." (Acts 15:32)

This ministry of prophet is not to be confused with the gift of prophecy, exercised in the church according to (1 Corinthians 14).

The prophet's mission is still today to edify the church with inspired messages, full of life and power, but he cannot add anything to the revelation that is transmitted to us by the Bible.

## **THE EVANGELISTS**

One of them, named Philip, had a particularly prominent and blessed activity among the Samaritans. He left Jerusalem where he worked as a deacon, helping to distribute food to the poor and widows of the Church. He came to a city in Samaria. There, his action was manifested in three specific areas:

1. He preached Christ. (Acts 8:5)
2. He performed miracles. (Acts 8:6)
3. He baptized the men and women who believed in Jesus. (Acts 8:12)

During this evangelization campaign, he gathered many people around him:

"The whole crowds were attentive to what Philip was saying." (Acts 8:6)

Philip knew the value of a soul. His ministry was not only to the crowds. He was subject to the voice of God and sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He allowed himself to be led to a soul: an Ethiopian! He evangelized him by "telling him the good news about Jesus." (Acts 8:35) He taught him baptism and baptized him in water after his confession of faith in Jesus, the Son of God. (Acts 8:38)

Philip had an itinerant ministry.

"He evangelized ALL THE CITIES through which he passed." (Acts 8:40)

He is the model by excellence of the evangelist. He calls and says, "COME, ENTER, all is ready, believe in Jesus." His message is centered on salvation in Jesus Christ and supported by Holy Scripture.

## **PASTORS**

In 1948, Dr. Donald GEE, well known for his excellent biblical teaching, sent me an article for the youth magazine "Lumière du Monde" that I was editing at that time. Here is an excerpt:

"Pastors are shepherds responsible for the "flock". The duties of the shepherd consist of living among the flock, feeding them, protecting them and, if necessary, sacrificing their lives to them. The shepherd's key word is ATTACH YOURSELF. (Acts 11:23)

The key word of the evangelist is COME. It is necessary for souls not only to come to Jesus, but to be attached to him. Many a Christian's backsliding is avoided by a gifted and faithful pastor."

When the apostle Paul landed at Miletus on the Turkish coast, he sent for the ELDERS OF THE CHURCH at Ephesus." (Acts 20:17)

This does not mean that he had the " old men " called according to the original meaning of the Greek word. The word "elder" does not necessarily refer to the older ones. It has a completely different meaning when it comes to exercising spiritual responsibility.

When he spoke with them, he said:

"The Holy Spirit has appointed you BISHOPS to shepherd the Church of the Lord, which he acquired with his own blood." (Acts 20:28)

To be an "**elder of the Church**" or "**bishop of a flock**" allows us to understand that there is no hierarchical position and that there is no religious system since there are several who are called both elders and bishops.

These two words correspond to the same function. They are equivalent.

Since the Church has its roots in the Jewish people, it is important to know that among the Jews, the word "elder" referred to the heads of families or clans representing the people in both religious and social affairs.

"Go, gather the elders of Israel, and tell them... "(Exodus 3:16, 17:5; Leviticus 4:15; Luke 22:66...)

The early church borrowed its organization from the Jewish people.

The word "elder" is Greek for "presbus," from which came the words "priest" and "presbytery." The word "bishop" which corresponds to the same responsibility comes from the Greek "episkopos", borrowed from the secular Greek language, and it means "one who watches, who observes, guardian, protector, overseer."

Today, to designate the same function, we use other words such as: pastor, spiritual leader, servant of God.

Throughout the history of the Jewish people, the synagogues of the Land of Israel and the Diaspora had 7 to 9 elders at their head.

The apostle Paul was a Jew, from the tribe of Benjamin, the son of a Pharisee, and had been a Pharisee himself (Philippians 3:5; Acts 23:8). He therefore had a perfect knowledge of the laws and customs of his people.

It was following the pattern of the synagogues that he "had elders appointed in every church." (Acts 14:23)

He also commissioned Titus, his companion, to establish them in every city on the island of Crete. (Titus 1:5)

The ministries are given "to build up the body of Christ and form A STRONG UNION." (Ephesians 4:12-16)

**In the Church, it is the quality of the spiritual life that takes precedence over the form of the organization. Structures, no matter how perfect, are only a skeleton if the life of the Spirit does not flow through them.**

Elder ministries are given to help maintain and nurture the spiritual life. It is easy to understand that a small community of 30 members does not function like a church of 3,000 members. At the Filadelfia Church of Pentecost in Stockholm, where I have had the pleasure of being invited several times by its founder, Pastor Pethrus and his successors, spiritual leadership is provided by the senior pastor surrounded by about 50 elders. Yonggi Cho, the Korean pastor who presides over a church of 80,000 members in Seoul, has more than a hundred elders working for him.

Whether there is one elder or a college of elders depending on the number of sheep, all elders are shepherds to whom these recommendations of the apostle Peter are addressed:

"These are my exhortations to THE ELDERS who are among you, I AN ELDER LIKE THEM, a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is to be manifested:

Feed the flock that is UNDER YOUR CARE, willingly, devotedly, being THE MODELS OF THE FLOCK.

And when the SOVEREIGN PASTOR (Shepherd) appears, you will obtain the incorruptible crown of glory." (1 Peter 5:1-4)

The word "shepherd" is said in Greek "poimèn", which literally means "shepherd". The same word is found in Ephesians 4:11.

Pastors are indeed shepherds of a flock, charged with giving spiritual food to the sheep. Didn't Jesus say to Peter? :

"Feed my sheep, feed my lambs." (John 21:15-17)

All the flocks belong to Jesus the Good Shepherd Sovereign. He said:

"MY sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me..." (John 10:27)

It is written in 1 Corinthians 12:28:

"God has appointed in the Church...those who have the gift of LEADERSHIP." The literal meaning of this word in the Greek is "to steer." This function corresponds to what is mentioned in Romans 12:8: "Let him who PRESIDES do so with zeal." This could be translated as "the one who leads, the one who is at the head of."

God is a God of order (1 Corinthians 14:33), and it is understandable that there is an authority, not overbearing, but spiritual, for the body to be well coordinated. (Ephesians 4:16)

James, the Lord's brother, was an elder at the head of the church in Jerusalem. "All the elders gathered at his house" to meet with the apostle Paul (Acts 21:18). This large church at that time included thousands of Jews who had believed in Jesus as Messiah and Savior (Acts 21:20).

The church must be built and led not with practices alien to biblical teaching, but by reflecting the New Testament model. While the functions are diverse, all of us are equal before our Savior who says to his disciples, "**One is your Master and YOU ARE ALL BROTHERS.**" (Matthew 23:8)

## **THE TEACHERS**

The Greek word "didaskalous," translated as "teachers," literally means, "THOSE WHO TEACH."

Teaching cannot be absent from the spiritual leadership of a church. This is why the apostle Paul required that bishops or elders ( that is, pastors) be "fit for teaching." (1 Timothy 3:2)

He made it clear in his letter to Timothy that some elders "lead" and others "work more especially at preaching and teaching." (1 Timothy 5:17)

Despite the fact that the pastor is qualified to teach, the ministry of a doctor or teacher can therefore be a special activity. This is confirmed by the fact that there were "teachers" in Antioch (Acts 13:1), and that it is written that "God has appointed ... teachers in the Church." (1 Corinthians 12:28)

Those who have received from God the ability to teach the truths of the Bible are exhorted to "hold fast to their teaching." (Romans 12:7)

In the Church that belongs to Jesus Christ, there are diversity of ministries (diaconôn), but the same Lord. (1 Corinthians 12:5)

To those who minister, the Bible says:

"Take heed to the ministry YOU HAVE RECEIVED." (Colossians 4:17)

"Fulfill YOUR MINISTRY well." (2Timothy 4:5)

**IF I STILL PLEASED MEN,  
I WOULD NOT BE A SERVANT OF CHRIST.  
(Galatians 1:10)**

## THERE ARE DIFFERENT FIELDS OF SERVICE FOR EVERYONE

The Church is a living body where everyone can and must serve Christ. It is like a beehive where each one has his share of activity. Not all Christians are called to the "ministry of the Word," but each one is called to serve Christ by "putting the gift he has received at the service of others." (1 Peter 4:10)

In 1963, Dr. Donald Gee sent me an article dedicated to youth and he gave, among others, the following advice:

"Take stock of your own work opportunities, meditating on the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30). Ask yourself what you are capable of doing. Could you teach? Do you have any musical talent? Can you speak with ease? Are you good at writing, at learning new languages? Or are you more skilled in manual labor?

And if you have no particular talent, ask yourself what you would like to do, what form of service your heart particularly urges you toward. Remember that THE LORD JESUS WANTS YOU, YOURSELF, ALL THE WAY. Consecration is giving ourselves to him as we are and without any reserve. He will then clothe us with His power through the Holy Spirit.

Have a broad vision embracing all the different fields of Christian service. Do not make the common mistake of considering this service only in terms of the pastorate or mission in pagan lands. These two forms of ministry are very special and may not be for you at all. But you can be just as dedicated in some other area. In any case, let your conception of Christian service never be limited or stereotyped on the model of others. Remember that many of us are called to SERVE THE LORD in the self-effacing realm of daily life. Among the most constructive elements within the family and the nation are the truly consecrated mothers whose ministry is to lead their own households faithfully, harmoniously, day after day.

It is very natural, of course, to feel attracted by the sensational, the remote jungles of Peru or New Guinea.

**But the deepest satisfaction of the heart is found only in the path of God's will, whatever that will may be for each of us.**

**All Christians should have a sense of divine calling.**

**This involves claiming the guidance of the Holy Spirit, allowing ourselves to be guided by him."**

## THE HOLY VOCATION TO MINISTRY

By faith Abraham, WHEN HE WAS CALLED, obeyed and went to a place he was to receive as an inheritance..." (Hebrews 11:8)

Vocation is God's call to a specific role.

Abraham obeyed God and set out for the promised land, as soon as God said to him, "Go from your country, your homeland, and your father's house, to the land that I will show you." (Genesis 12:1)

He relied on what God told him. He had faith in God's Word and he set out with conviction, trust and seriousness.

"Let him who is CALLED TO THE MINISTRY, cleave to his ministry." (Romans 12:7)

Not all of us are called to hear God's voice like Abraham. Christ's call to serve him is not experienced by all in a uniform way.

It may manifest itself in a desire, an aspiration: "If anyone ASPIRES to the office of bishop..." (1 Timothy 3:1), by a deep need to do something for God. Sometimes it can be translated by an inner fire aroused by the Holy Spirit and burning to the point of being ready to overcome all obstacles.

Circumstances willed by God or a prophetic word may confirm an inner call, or specify a particular call for a certain mission, as was the case for Barnabas and Paul. The Holy Spirit said in a prayer meeting, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 13:2). On another occasion, God called the apostle Paul to go to Greece by giving him a vision of a Macedonian who said, "Go over to Macedonia and help us." He told his companions and they all concluded that the Lord was calling him to preach the Good News there (Acts 16:10). Sharing with experienced brothers in the faith our revelations is an attitude of wisdom.

It is essential to have an unshakeable inner conviction in order to stand firm in the service when the dark hours, the difficult struggles, the discouragements, the temptations to abandon will come.

It is the Master who establishes his servants, not the servants who establish themselves.

"What faithful and careful servant has his Master **APPOINTED** over his people?" (Matthew 24:45)

"Jesus called those whom he wanted, and they came to him. He **APPOINTED** twelve of them." (Mark 3:13)

"God **ESTABLISHED** in the Church first of all apostles..." (1 Corinthians 12:28)

"The Holy Spirit HAS **APPOINTED** you bishops." (Acts 20:28)

Twice the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

"I have been **APPOINTED** a preacher." (1 Timothy 2:7 and 2 Timothy 1:11)

Having the conviction that we have received our vocation from God does not exclude the need to have the approval of the brothers who have been established with us.

The apostle himself, despite the revelations he received from God, went to Jerusalem to meet with the first apostles.

"I expounded to them," he said, "the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles; I expounded it especially to those who are most highly regarded, that I might not run or have run in vain." (Galatians 2:2)

# ABILITIES

Being willing to serve Christ does not mean being called to do anything, anyhow.

The call to a given task must be matched by certain abilities, natural, spiritual, and sometimes supernatural qualifications acquired or to be acquired.

Timothy, whose mother was Jewish and father Greek, was a member of the church of Lystra in Asia Minor.

All the brothers gave a good testimony about him and the apostle saw fit to take him on as a co-worker. He took him with him.

So sometimes God's call comes through an elder in ministry. This was my own experience at the age of nineteen.

The apostle Paul introduced Timothy, gave him a solid biblical training and wrote him letters of advice and encouragement. In his second letter, he gave him this recommendation: "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to faithful men, who are ABLE to teach others also." (1 Timothy 2:2)

In the service of Christ, we must distinguish three kinds of abilities: natural, spiritual, and supernatural.

## 1 - Natural abilities

Some are naturally gifted for music and singing, others for manual or intellectual work. All of these abilities put at the service of God are very useful and should not be neglected.

The apostle Paul advised his young companion Timothy to apply himself to reading (1 Timothy 4:13). One can be uneducated like some of the apostles (Acts 4:13) or scholars like the apostle Paul (Acts 22:3), but it is always possible at any age to increase one's knowledge in order to be more and more able to fulfill one's ministry.

## 2 - Spiritual abilities

God does not ask us to be scholars, but to combine our natural abilities with spirituality.

"We speak the things of God," says the apostle Paul, "not with words taught by human wisdom, but with those taught by the Spirit, using spiritual language for spiritual things." (1 Corinthians 12:13)

## 3 - Supernatural abilities

They are not obtained on the benches of a high school or a faculty, even of theology, nor on the benches of a Bible school. They are given by the Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit who gives the gifts for the common good:

"the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:7)

The Bible exhorts us to long for them:



"Long for spiritual gifts." (1 Corinthians 14:1)  
"Aspire to the best gifts." (1 Corinthians 12:31)

## **WOMEN IN THE SERVICE OF JESUS CHRIST**

"Then SHE SERVED THEM." (Mark 1:31)

How beautiful is this simple sentence! Immediately healed, Peter's mother-in-law, who was lying down with a fever, got up and began to serve Christ and his disciples.

Women are not excluded from service. While they are not allowed to take authority over men (1 Timothy 2:12), and while they are not included in the list of ministries given to the Church, it is very important to note that not only men served Christ. The Gospel mentions the presence of several women in the service of Jesus.

He gave men the leading role and chose twelve MEN to be his apostles. However, he had women who had been healed of various diseases or delivered from evil spirits and women of renown and wealth in his service:

"The twelve were with him and SOME WOMEN who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: MARY called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had come out, JOANNA, wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, SUSANNA and SEVERAL OTHERS who assisted him with their possessions." (Luke 8:2-3)

They served the Lord by taking part in his mission in a material way. They were already "deaconesses" as was PHOEBE of the church of Cenchreae of whom Paul said, "Phoebe, our sister, who is A DEACONESS, has given help to many and to myself." (Romans 16:1-2)

### **Serving by witnessing**

– "Come and see a man who has told me all that I have done; could it not be Christ?"  
(John 4:29)

The woman who reported this to the people of her town of Sychar was a Samaritan woman. The apostles were in town, busy buying food. Meanwhile, sitting on the edge of Jacob's well, Jesus was talking with her. The woman had come to draw water and Jesus, in order to draw her up to the spiritual heights of faith, had initiated the conversation by asking her for a drink.

After the conversation, the woman left her pitcher by the well and, in her joy at having met Jesus, returned to the city TO TELL ALL THE INHABITANTS and persuade them to come and see Jesus. Many believed in Jesus "because of HIS TESTIMONY." (John 4:40)

**Witnessing, telling what Christ IS and HAS DONE, is not a monopoly reserved for men. This privilege belongs to all Christians.**

If you are not called to fill a ministry, you can still win souls, one after another. It was a nanny who won the great English philanthropist Lord Shaftesbury to the Savior. While attending to her domestic duties as the little maid in Naaman's house, she realized that she also had spiritual duties. No, she certainly could not be a pastor of a large church, but she could speak of the love of the Lord Jesus to the little child who was then Lord Shaftesbury. And so it was that a humble little maid won for the Savior, one of the greatest heroes of English Christianity.

- You shall be my witnesses," Jesus said to his disciples (Acts 1:8).

The word "witness" is mentioned 175 times in the New Testament.

A sister in Christ, somewhat shy about going to witness to her neighbors, had the idea of writing them a letter in which she simply told them what Jesus had done for her, explaining how Jesus had changed her life and made her happy, and also how he had healed her through the laying on of hands of a preacher. She ended her letter by inviting them to come to the gospel meetings where she would be happy to see them. In this way, souls can also be won to the Lord.

Today, it is easy to have multiple copies of such letters photocopied and put them in your neighborhood mailboxes or mailed. This is also a way to serve Christ.

### **Serving by Welcoming**

—"A WOMAN named MARTHA received him into her house." (Luke 10:38)

She knows that receiving Jesus and his twelve apostles entails a lot of work. She immediately set to work. She worries and works hard to prepare the best possible reception for them. Meanwhile, MARY, her sister, sits at the Lord's feet, listening to his teaching.

Seeing this, Martha complains to Jesus and says:

- "My sister leaves me alone TO SERVE." And Jesus replies:

- "Mary has chosen THE GOOD PARTt." (Luke 10:40)

This remark by Jesus does not detract from the value of Martha's activities, and Mary certainly came to her aid afterwards, but it is a lesson so that we may learn to prioritize the spiritual, the Word of God, while exercising hospitality.

To speak well of Jesus, it is necessary to put ourselves at his feet, to learn to listen to him, which will also avoid saying what should not be said (1 Timothy 5:13), and to keep the right balance between material responsibilities and spiritual duties, and vice versa.

During their missionary journeys, the apostle Paul, the prophet Silas and Timothy stopped in the city of Philippi, Greece. They went outside the city to a river where there was a place of prayer. There were only WOMEN there, PRAYING TOGETHER – Often women are more faithful than men in

prayer meetings! – Among these women was one named LYDIA, a purple merchant. The Bible says, "She was a woman who feared God and listened."

The Lord opened her heart and she was baptized with her family, and then she addressed the apostle Paul and his companions with this urgent invitation, "If you judge me to be faithful to the Lord, ENTER MY HOUSE AND STAY THERE." (Acts 16:13-15)

What a great example! Women who pray, fear God and listen to God's messengers. And what hospitality on the part of Lydia who welcomes the servants of God!

When the home is Christian, it is wonderful to see the husband and wife serving the Lord together, as was the case with Priscilla and Aquila. Paul called them both his "fellow workers in Christ Jesus," (Romans 16:3-5). They welcomed the apostle into their home and opened their house to receive the local church (Acts 18:1-3).

When a pastor from Normandy came to Reims to found an evangelical church, my parents welcomed the pastor and his wife. For a month, my mother devoted herself to feeding them and offering them the best hospitality possible. In serving this pastor, she served the Lord.

### **Serving in prayer**

Isn't prayer also a way of serving the Lord? A very beautiful example is given to us in the Bible; it is that of HANNAH, the prophetess:

"She was very advanced in age, being 84 years old, and she did not leave the temple, and she SERVED GOD night and day in fasting and IN PRAYER. SHE SPOKE ABOUT JESUS to all those who were waiting for the deliverance of Jerusalem." (Luke 2:36-38)

At the age of 84, SHE WAS SERVING GOD IN PRAYER! And SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT JESUS! Isn't praying and telling others about Jesus a noble service?

At the time of Jesus, in the synagogues and in the Temple, women were usually separated from men, but after Jesus' ascension, MEN and WOMEN gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem to pray together.

"All of them (the apostles) with one accord persevered IN PRAYER, together WITH THE WOMEN AND Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with the brothers of Jesus." (Acts 1:14)

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit also came upon the women and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. For them, this prophecy of Joel was fulfilled:

"In the last days, says God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; your sons and daughters shall prophesy. Yes, on my servants and ON MY HANDMAIDENS in that day I will pour out of my Spirit and they will prophesy." (Acts 2:1-18)

Since that day of Pentecost, women have an active part in the Church that belongs to Jesus Christ. They can PRAY and PROPHECY (1 Corinthians 11:5). By prophesying, they edify, exhort, comfort

and instruct the Church (1 Corinthians 14:5 and 31). The evangelist Philip "had four virgin daughters who prophesied." (Acts 21:9)

### **Serving by doing good works**

"Let them adorn themselves with GOOD WORKS, as is fitting for WOMEN WHO PROFESS TO SERVE GOD." (1 Timothy 2:10)

When Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, whom he had certainly healed, a woman came to him. She poured on his head the perfume of great price contained in an alabaster vase. The disciples were indignant. When Jesus saw this, he said to them, "Why are you hurting this woman? SHE HAS DONE A GOOD DEED for me. In all the world, people will tell in memory of this woman what she has done." (Matthew 25:6-13)

The Lord knows the intentions of hearts and He values good deeds done for Him. He even goes so far as to say:

"Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of the least of these because he is my disciple, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward." (Matthew 10:42)

### **Serving by fighting for the Gospel**

How can we not be full of admiration for the women who, from Galilee to Calvary, followed Jesus? It is written in the Gospel that at the time of the Lord's agony and death, "there were MANY WOMEN watching from a distance. They had accompanied Jesus from Galilee, TO SERVE HIM." (Matthew 27:55) They participated in the burial by preparing spices and perfumes.

It took a lot of courage to serve Jesus in Jerusalem, in a climate of hostility and suffering.

The apostle Paul knew how to highlight the dedication of the sisters who helped him in his apostolate, he wrote:

"I exhort Evody and I exhort Syntyche to be of one mind in the Lord. THEY FOUGHT FOR THE GOSPEL with me and with Clement and my other fellow workers." (Philippians 4:2-3)

"Greet Perside, the beloved, **who has LABORED much FOR THE LORD.**" (Romans 16:12)

**Sisters and brothers united in this fight for the Gospel, each in his or her own function, is the true face of the Church in the service of Christ.**

Women can fight for the Gospel in so many ways, as we have just seen: witnessing, praying, prophesying, welcoming, helping... But I would not want to ignore the role of the woman among the children. I owe a lot to my instructor, Miss Biolley, who despite being 80 years old, taught the children in the Sunday school. She helped me with her judicious advice in the orientation of my vocation. I also owe much to my mother who was an excellent Christian and who marked my adolescence by her piety. I am reminded of Timothy, to whom the apostle Paul reminded the faith of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, to whom he owed his upbringing in "SINCERE FAITH." (2 Timothy 1:5)

May every sister in Christ Jesus, called to fight for the Gospel, be able to say like Mary, mother of Jesus:

**"I AM THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD."** (Luke 1:38)

## **HOW CAN WE SERVE CHRIST?**

### **SPIRITUAL QUALITIES REQUIRED**

How we do what we should do is as important as what we do.

#### **– Enthusiasm**

At the age of 16, when I was a student at the Practical School of Commerce in the city of Reims, I took my school books out of my satchel on the day when there was no class and filled it with New Testaments that I went to sell door to door, without profit, solely with the aim of spreading the Word of God. Then in 1939, shortly before the declaration of war, when a place was found on Vesle Street to announce the Gospel, I distributed thousands of invitations to the houses. No one had ordered me to do this, no one had forced me to do it. In my enthusiasm as a young Christian, I wanted to do something for Christ.

One must not kill the enthusiasm of those who want to serve Christ. We must be careful not to extinguish the fire of first love, not to clip the wings of faith.

"Better to have too much faith than not enough!" pastor Saillens once told me.

**But enthusiasm must not drive us to overzealousness that would harm God's work. That is why it is good to listen to the advice of experienced spiritual leaders.**

#### **– Availability**

Serving Christ requires a total consecration of our life, a renunciation of ourselves, a putting at his disposal of our life.

To be at his service is to be available to go where he wants us to go, to do what he wants us to do. Sometimes it costs because we have our habits, our family ties, our fixed ideas, our traditions, our fears. To serve him and do HIS WILL, we must be ready to sacrifice.

#### **– Humility**

It is one of the main marks of a good servant. The Lord insisted on this point because the human heart tends to elevate itself.

Jesus himself gave himself as an example, a model to his disciples:

"I am among you," he told them, "as one who serves." (Luke 22:27)

Yet he is the MASTER! And he, the Master, humbled himself, stripped himself to the point of taking "the form of a servant." (Philippians 2:7)

"The servant is not greater than the Master," he says. (John 13:13; Luke 22:24) The Christian is to be like him.

**The one who serves, no matter what service he performs or what ministry he has received, must never forget that he is a Christian, that is: A SINNER SAVED BY GRACE.**

"Whoever wants to be great among you, let him be your servant," Jesus said to his apostles (Mark 10:43)

Here is some advice from Pastor Ove Falg, about humility:

"There is nothing sweeter, more pleasing and more edifying than to be in the company of servants and handmaids of God whose humility is made known in everything and everywhere, in their words and in their conduct."

It is remarkable to see what was the condition and state of mind which, under the old covenant, distinguished the men whom God chose for his service:

Of **MOSES** it is said:

"Now Moses was a strong and gentle man more than any man who was on the face of the earth." (Numbers 12:3)

And when God presented himself to him to give him the charge to lead his people, it was with great fear that he received his calling. Trembling, he asked God to send another in his place, so aware was he of his unworthiness and incapacity. (Exodus 3:11 and 4:10)

Every true servant knows this same fear and sense of unworthiness when he is called to the work of God.

**GIDEON** said to the angel of the Lord who came to call him to deliver the people of Israel from the oppression of the Midianites:

"My family is the poorest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house." (Judges 6:15)  
God answered him, "But I will be with you."

This is also God's promise to all who recognize their weakness and poverty in the face of the task to which they are called.

David was humbly tending his father's flock when the prophet Samuel came to anoint him. Then the prophet said:

"Man looks at what strikes the eyes, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

This example shows us that God's choice is not made according to the estimation of men, and that the most suitable instruments for the Lord's work are often those who, socially speaking, are the least regarded. (Acts 4:13-14; 1 Corinthians 1:26-29) The psalmist Asaph celebrates the work of David, the shepherd-king, in Psalm 78 with these words:

"The Lord chose David his servant, and drew him out of the sheepfolds..."

**It doesn't matter where the Lord pulls us from to place us in his service, whether it's from a sheepfold, a fishing boat, a farm, a workshop, or an office; what God expects of us is that we FAITHFULLY AND HUMBLY fulfill our ministry to the end.** (1 Corinthians 4:1-5)

Let's not leave room for pride. The Bible says:

"Humility goes before glory, but pride goes before a fall." (Proverbs 27:2) So watch out!

The apostle Paul, who had a thorn in his flesh so that he would not be proud of the divine revelations he had received, said, "What I am, I am by the grace of God." (1 Corinthians 15:10)

Again, he says, "Our ability is from God." (2 Corinthians 3:5)

It is natural to rejoice in the good result of our work in the service of the Master. However, the main thing is not what we do, but **WHAT THE MASTER DOES** with us, through us, using us.

When the apostle Paul went to James, the Lord's brother and senior pastor of the Jerusalem church, he told all the elders gathered at James' house "**WHAT GOD HAD DONE** among the Gentiles **THROUGH HIS MINISTRY.**" (Acts 21:18-19)

To the pastors of Ephesus, he reminded them of his attitude during his stay among them:

"You know how, from the first day I entered Asia, I have continually conducted myself with you, **SERVING THE LORD IN ALL HUMILITY.**" (Acts 20:18-19)

**All the glory belongs to God and Jesus Christ, even when we have successes. Let us never forget that what we are, we are by the grace of God.**

I read somewhere this allegory:

"The stream once said to the mill, 'I can see that you are grinding beans with as much pleasure as the finest wheat. My role is to grind, whether it is this or that, what does it matter to me? **MY DUTY IS TO SERVE MY MASTER,** and I am just as useful in one case as in the other. The main thing is that I do my job as well as possible.

What matters is to do what the Master tells us to do, to do it well and not to deviate from it. Jesus does not ask anything else of us (Matthew 24:46).

## **– Joy**

Jesus sent 70 disciples on a mission, two by two, to all the cities where he was to go. The Gospel says: "They returned **WITH JOY,** saying: Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your Name."

And Jesus answered them:

"Do not rejoice that the demons are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:17-20)

It is because we are children of God that we are happy to serve Christ. The joy of service is therefore not a function of the outcome. It is permanent in our hearts.

"Suffer with me for the sake of the gospel," Paul told Timothy (2 Timothy 1:8). Paul recounted all his sufferings in the service of God, (in 2 Corinthians 11:16-23). Despite this, he wrote to the Philippians: "And though I serve as a drink offering for the sacrifices and service of your faith, I rejoice in it, and I rejoice with you all. You also rejoice in the same way and rejoice with me."

It is true that serving Christ sometimes entails suffering and persecution. In this regard, it is good to meditate on this text from a psalm:

"Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. He who walks with weeping when he bears seed, returns with gladness when he carries his sheaves." (Psalm 125:5-6)

As the good shepherd rejoices when he finds his lost sheep and brings it back to the fold, so, says Jesus, there is joy in heaven when a sinner repents (Luke 15:3-7).

There is plenty of cause for joy in the service of Christ.

To serve Christ with joy all our lives, what a beautiful ideal!

The apostle Paul expressed his dedication to the service of Christ in these words:

"I make no account of my life for myself, as though it were precious to me, provided I FULFILL MY COURSE WITH JOY, and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus, to preach the good news of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24)

May it be so for us too!

Let us serve the Lord WITH JOY and perseverance until his glorious return.

## **STRENGTH TO SERVE CHRIST**

Jesus Christ is an extraordinary Master. He is both severe and good. He asks us to serve him and, at the same time, he offers to help us by giving us the necessary strength.

"GO," he says to his disciples, "AND PREACH THE GOOD NEWS to every creature." (Mark 16:16)  
This is a command.

But then he makes these promises to them:

"I AM WITH YOU always." (Matthew 28:20)

"I will send upon you what my Father has promised." (Luke 24:49)



"I will send you the Holy Spirit." (John 16:7)

"YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses."  
(Acts 1:8)

Man alone is weak. It is to the extent that he is aware of this that he feels the need for the strength communicated by the Holy Spirit.

To be a witness, he needs to receive power from above (Luke 24:49).

We must certainly put all our natural abilities into action for God. However, let us not forget that our work can only bear fruit insofar as God acts with us.

This was the conviction of the apostle Paul who said:

"It is not he who plants that is something, nor he who waters, BUT GOD WHO MAKES IT GROW." (1 Corinthians 3:7)

Furthermore, the apostle Paul gave more importance to the demonstration of spirit and power than to persuasive speeches of wisdom so that the faith of his listeners would be founded on the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)

Serving Christ is not always easy, let's face it. Sometimes we have to face misunderstanding, mockery, painful situations. When we have to pay with our own hands, sacrifice our comfort, our habits, it seems very difficult. With God it is not impossible and the apostle Paul shared his experience with the Philippians:

"IN EVERYTHING and EVERYWHERE I have learned to be full and to be hungry, to be in abundance and to be in want. **I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH HIM WHO STRENGTHENS ME.**" (Philippians 4:12-13)

"When I am weak," he says, "that is when I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10)

He specifies elsewhere:

"I work in battle WITH HIS STRENGTH which works mightily in me." (Colossians 1:29)

Every ministry must be filled "ACCORDING TO THE STRENGTH WHICH GOD IMPARTS" (1 Peter 4:11), for it is not a spirit of timidity that God has given us, but A SPIRIT OF STRENGTH, love and wisdom." (2 Timothy 1:7)

Here is a promise from God's Word for each of us:

"Those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength." (Isaiah 40:31)

## **ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE MASTER**

"Each of us will give an account to God for himself." (Romans 14:12)

The face-to-face meeting with the Master will come one day. That time is very close to us. He will soon return on the clouds of heaven and he has advised us to be at work when he arrives:

"Who then is the faithful and prudent servant whom his master has set over his people, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find doing so! I tell you the truth, he will set him over all his possessions. But if he is a wicked servant, who says within himself, 'My master is slow in coming. That servant's master will come on a day when he does not expect it and at an hour he does not know, and will give him his share with the hypocrites.'" (Matthew 24:45-51)

The teacher is demanding, while respecting our freedom. To share in the reward, we must be faithful to the commitment we have made to serve him until his glorious return.

"Each one will receive his own reward, according to HIS OWN work." (1 Corinthians 3:8)

On the shores of an Italian lake stood a magnificent palace, within a verdant park, adorned with beautiful shrubs and a multitude of splendid flowers.

An amazed visitor was about to enter the park when he saw a brave man with greying hair appear. It was the gardener. He asked him:

- Who owns this wonderful house, these alleys and these baskets of flowers so well kept?
- To a Roman countess!" was the gardener's reply.
- Does she come often?
- Her last visit was seven years ago!

Surprised by this answer, the visitor thought that the countess would come soon and asked:

- Are you expecting her soon?
- I don't know.
- She never announces herself. She could come today!

This gardener carefully and conscientiously performed his work as a gardener and guardian of the palace.

So the important thing is, as the Lord says, to be found, at the time of his coming, doing what he has commanded.

"Besides, what is required of the servants of Christ is that each one be found FAITHFUL." (1 Corinthians 4:1-2)

The Master will judge us not by the amount of service we perform, but by our faithfulness:

"Well done, GOOD SERVANT; for YOU HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL in a few things..." (Luke 19:17)

## **THE REWARDS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED JESUS CHRIST HERE ON EARTH**

We serve Christ because we love him and not for the sake of rewards. We love him more than our vocation. To serve him will be a grace, a privilege, until the end.

The Bible contains promises of rewards for the men and women servants who put their lives and possessions at the service of Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of lords.

Even the cup of water given to the least of these "will not lose its reward," said Jesus (in Matthew 10:42).

A young man came one day to one of the richest merchants in New York, asking for a job. He was asked to come back the next day. In the afternoon, walking along the main boulevard of Broadway, he saw a poor old apple seller who had just been knocked down by an omnibus with her basket, and who looked very sorry. He ran over to her, helped her up, picked up her apples and left.

The next day he returned to the merchant's house and was immediately received as a clerk. Shortly afterwards, he learned that the owner had seen him helping the apple seller and, favorably impressed, had given him the position that twenty others had asked for.

God also sees all the good we do, all the work we do to serve Jesus Christ, and "each one will receive from God the praise due to him." (1 Corinthians 4:5)

To those who have displayed the talents received from God, he will say:

"Good and faithful servant, ENTER INTO THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER." (Matthew 25:21)

At the end of his life, the apostle Paul made this confession:

"The time of my departure approaches. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on, THE CROWN OF JUSTICE is reserved for me. The Lord, the righteous judge, will give it to me on that day, and not only to me, but TO ALL WHO HAVE LOVED HIS COMING." (1 Timothy 4:6-7)

The apostle Peter said to the "elders":

"When" the sovereign shepherd appears, you will obtain THE INCORRUPTIBLE CROWN OF GLORY." (1 Peter 5:4)

Jesus made this promise:

"WHERE I AM, THERE WILL MY SERVANT BE ALSO!"

"If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him." (John 4:26)

Isn't being where Jesus is the ultimate reward?

And in heaven, we will continue to SERVE HIM, as the Bible states:

**"HIS SERVANTS WILL SERVE HIM  
AND SEE HIS FACE."  
(Revelation 22:3)**

**Isn't serving him here on earth and for eternity wonderful? What a great grace!**

**"Each one will receive HIS OWN REWARD,  
according to HIS OWN WORK."  
(1 Corinthians 3:8)**

**MY BELOVED BRETHREN, BE STEADFAST, UNWAVERING,  
WORKING BETTER AND BETTER AT THE WORK OF THE LORD  
KNOWING THAT YOUR LABOR WILL NOT BE IN VAIN IN THE LORD.  
(1 Corinthians 15:58)**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- Serving Christ is a privilege
- The Master
- To be a servant of Jesus Christ, a noble service
- The vocation of the apostles
- The priesthood
- The ministers of God
- There are different fields of service for all
- The holy vocation to ministry
- Abilities
- Women in the service of Jesus Christ
- How to serve Christ?
- Strength to serve Christ
- Accountability to the Master
- Rewards for those who have served Jesus Christ here on earth

