

“
The greatest among you
must be your servant.”
(Mt 23:11)

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November 5, 2023 | Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mal 1:14b-2:2b, 8-10 | 1 Thes 2:7b-9, 13 | Mt 23:1-12

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

We all want to feel special and be noticed. We see it in Adam and Eve's decision to eat the fruit in the garden after the snake promises "your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods." (Gen 3:5) The scribes and the Pharisees in today's Gospel certainly appear to fall into this category of wanting to be noticed: "All their works are performed to be seen," Jesus says. To be clear, we ARE each unique children of God: chosen by him and called by name. We are "wonderfully made" by the Lord (Ps 139:14), and that alone makes us valuable beyond measure. The problem arises when we begin to see our value as something we are responsible for on our own. We no longer give glory to God and acknowledge him as the fount of all good things. Instead, we are tempted to take credit for ourselves – that was the error of the scribes and the Pharisees, and it is one against which we should guard ourselves.

PRAY The *Catechism* calls humility the "foundation of prayer." (CCC 2559) Let us pray this week for the humility to do God's will without any praise or recognition. Let us ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom to know what the Lord wants from us and to joyfully fulfill that call even if it means working in the shadows where no one will notice.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Today's readings are instructive and, frankly, a good reminder that as God's beloved children baptized into Christ, we are called to a higher standard. What is this higher standard? First, it entails "[giving] thanks to God unceasingly," as St. Paul said in today's reading. It also involves practicing what we preach in a way the Pharisees do not. At the heart of Jesus' message today is telling us, his followers, how we are meant to live. We are to follow Jesus' words and strive to imitate his actions with humility and love. Does this mean loving unconditionally? It does. Does this mean not seeking places of honor but rather having a servant's attitude? It does. Are these postures and attitudes that come naturally to us as human beings? As descendants of Adam and Eve? Perhaps not. But if we wish to make Jesus the master of our lives, let us discern where we can be serving others better and putting our energy into the work of building God's kingdom.