



Motivations and Rewards of Service

MOTIVATIONS:

+We must think of “service” in the context of our personal mission as Christians.

WHAT IS OUR PERSONAL MISSION?

- *In the gospel of St. Matthew, Christ bids us to, ***“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”***
Matthew 5:48
- *St. Athanasius teaches, *“God became man so that man might become gods.”*
- *St. Paul teaches, ***“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”***
Galatians 2:20

So, our personal mission as Christians, is to be CHRIST-LIKE.

*Christ teaches us how to be Christ-like in John 15:12-14, when he says, ***“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”***

To understand this, let us start with the LAST VERSE: We are his friends (interchangeable with sons), if we do WHATEVER HE COMMANDS us to do. WHAT did He COMMAND us to do? This can be found in the FIRST VERSE: to LOVE ONE ANOTHER as He has loved us. And HOW did He LOVE US? The MIDDLE VERSE tells us that He did so by LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE FOR US.

So, we are called to be Christ-like by DEVOTING ALL OUR LIVES TO OUR BROTHERS.

In essence then, we fulfill our personal mission as Christians by devoting all our lives to our brothers.

+So, you see that here we have discussed two MOTIVATIONS FOR SERVICE; one builds upon the other: we desire to be Christ-like and that desire causes us to love our brothers.

HOW must we serve our brothers? In the same way that CHRIST SERVED US.

HOW did CHRIST serve us? St. Athanasius says, *"It was by offering and sacrificing His Body—that Body which was free from ever stain—abolishing death for His human brothers after that."*

So, we too, must HELP SAVE OUR BROTHERS from sin in the same way, as St Jude writes, ***"And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."*** Jude 1:22-23

This, according to St Dorotheos of Gaza, is the PRECISE PURPOSE of one who serves, for he says, *"The servant corrects as a duty performed for the sake of love and cleanness of heart."*

+So, now we see how the THIRD MOTIVATION OF SERVICE builds upon the other two we have already discussed: I hate and try to fight the evil that attacks my brother because I DO NOT LIKE what it does to one that I love.

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+There are UNFORTUNATELY OTHER motivations for service. Amongst those are (a)being popular, (b)being recognized for the good things that you do, (c)being thought of as holy or religious.

+We must know those who seek service for this cause, will find their efforts frustrated and their PLANS THWARTED.

Let us see an EXAMPLE of this in Acts 8:9,12-13, 17-23: ***“But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”***

St John Chrysostom explains this man's intentions as follows: *“This man should have asked to receive the Holy Spirit, but HE DOES NOT CARE FOR THIS. He, instead, asks for the power to give the Spirit to others. This man wished to be more prominent than Philip.”*

St John Chrysostom condemns those intentions saying, *“Do you see how having trivial thoughts about great things is to sin twice: Simon believed the Holy Spirit was a power that comes from man and his purpose was evil.”*

+We can fall into that same trap: we may DESIRE SERVICE and SEEK service for our OWN GAIN. In this case, we sin twice, in that we imagine that service is a power given to us by other humans and we seek for it for our own bad purposes.

#### **REWARDS:**

+Many of the REWARDS of service can also SERVE AS MOTIVATIONS to serve. In that way, service is SELF-SUSTAINING; as difficult as it becomes,

you will constantly taste the REWARDS THAT MOTIVATE YOU TO CONTINUE.

+The FIRST REWARD is that, you will see the transformational, miraculous work of God in the life of those you serve.

St. Paul teaches, ***“then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”*** I Corinthians 3:7.

You will see THE RESURRECTION in the life of those you serve, often at a time WHEN YOU ARE NOT WORKING HARD with them or AFTER you have GIVEN UP.

God allows for this so that you do NOT LOSE HOPE, but also so that you DO NOT CONFUSE YOUR ROLE WITH HIS.

WHAT is your role? It is to be, as St. Paul teaches, ***“ministers by whom you believed...”*** I Corinthians 3:5

We, as St John Chrysostom teaches, ***“are the ones who hand out the blessings that have been provided by God, so HE is the BENEFACTOR but we are ONLY MINISTERS.”***

+Here, we also see the SECOND REWARD in that we are FORCED to learn other lessons that are hard to learn otherwise: humility and patience, because we quickly come face to face with incapacities that only God ultimately addresses for us.

+The THIRD REWARD is like the first in that God allows us to see the truth and power of spiritual principles that it is so easy for us to take for granted.

This fact comes alive in the words said to Martha, ***“Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?”*** John 11:40

Sometimes, when you serve, YOU CANNOT BELIEVE what you are seeing, and what is happening in front of you. You feel HELPLESS and say to yourself, “there is NOTHING MORE I CAN DO; if God does NOT INTERVENE, this will SURELY TURN into a disaster.” You are so POWERLESS, that all you can do is to turn to PRAYER AND FASTING. Because you are so sincerely troubled by the problems of one you care for you, YOU DO BOTH EARNESTLY, SINCERELY, AND WITH FAITH, and you do END UP SEEING THEIR POWER.

This is why St John Chrysostom says, *“Faith is truly a blessing when it comes from good feelings, great love, and a determined soul; this faith makes us wise, it hides our human weakness...it is able to understand and succeed in those things that human wisdom cannot discover.”*

+The FOURTH REWARD is that God will allow us, IF WE ARE HUMBLE, to learn more from those we serve than they learn from us.

WHY do I say, if we ARE HUMBLE? I say it because it is not easy to accept ADVICE OR CORRECTION from one whom you feel you feel is “less than you.”

Remember the Jews reaction to the MAN BORN BLIND. When he tried to witness to Christ, they became offended that they were being taught by “a sinner”, so they lashed out against him saying, ***“Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?”*** John 9:34, and they cast him out.

This is why St Peter bids us to, ***“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock,”*** I Peter 5:3-4.

If we act as LORDS, we will be too PROUD TO SEE THE LESSONS we can learn from God's flock. But, if we look with EYES OF HUMILITY, we will see the REST of Christ's Flock as OUR TEACHERS, and they will hold us ACCOUNTABLE and FORCE US TO BE GOOD EXAMPLES.