

## **Homily: March 8, 2023**

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On our Lenten journey today, Jesus, our brother and Christ, will teach us servanthood is essential to our discipleship with him. There are forms of servanthood and surrender to God's will that we sometimes hesitate to follow. And so we call upon our compassionate God.

Jesus challenges us during this Lenten journey to be like him—to give one's life in service. In Lenten terms, this can mean fasting from being "great" and feasting on being a servant. Fasting from seats of honor and power over others while feasting on the chalice of powerful love poured out.

You and I must ask, "What are my forms of selfishly seeking honor and power from which I need to fast?" On the flip side, "What are the forms of being in humble and powerful service which I need to enact? We saw many images of such powerful and tireless service by rescue teams during the earthquake in Syria and Turkey. "Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant."

Yesterday and for all 58 years before this, March 7 has become a major commemoration of 600 people, including at least two small children, who became servants for civil, especially voting rights. They risked their lives, many beaten bloody in that peaceful march of 1965. Hence, that Sunday was named "Bloody Sunday of Selma, Alabama."

The sacrifice of these people captured the hearts of many more people—black and white alike, ever since. Bloody Sunday witnessed the power of servanthood and the bankruptcy of violent pushback. The annual commemorations keep alive the call for fulfilling the divine promises of true freedom for anyone not yet experiencing the full benefits of being beloved daughters or sons of God. Our society still cries for ongoing efforts to abolish discrimination and establish that global family of people created equal in the image of a compassionate and merciful God.

However, that struggle, whether by dramatic marches or courageous conversations, depends on our daily awareness of our thirst for glory, honor, and power. It depends on our intentional fasting from all forms of blatant or subtle wielding of that power and display of ego-driven glory-seeking. The annual Lenten fast calls us to set aside various pleasurable elements. Such fasting can strengthen and enable us to take necessary and difficult steps to build better relationships with our families, wider communities, and people who challenge our love.

Our brother Jesus fasted as he fostered and deepened his relationship with God alone. That relationship strengthened Jesus to choose the God of love alone whenever he experienced temptation—in the desert and after that.

Jesus said, **“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life.”** May we let Jesus guide us in our Lenten prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.