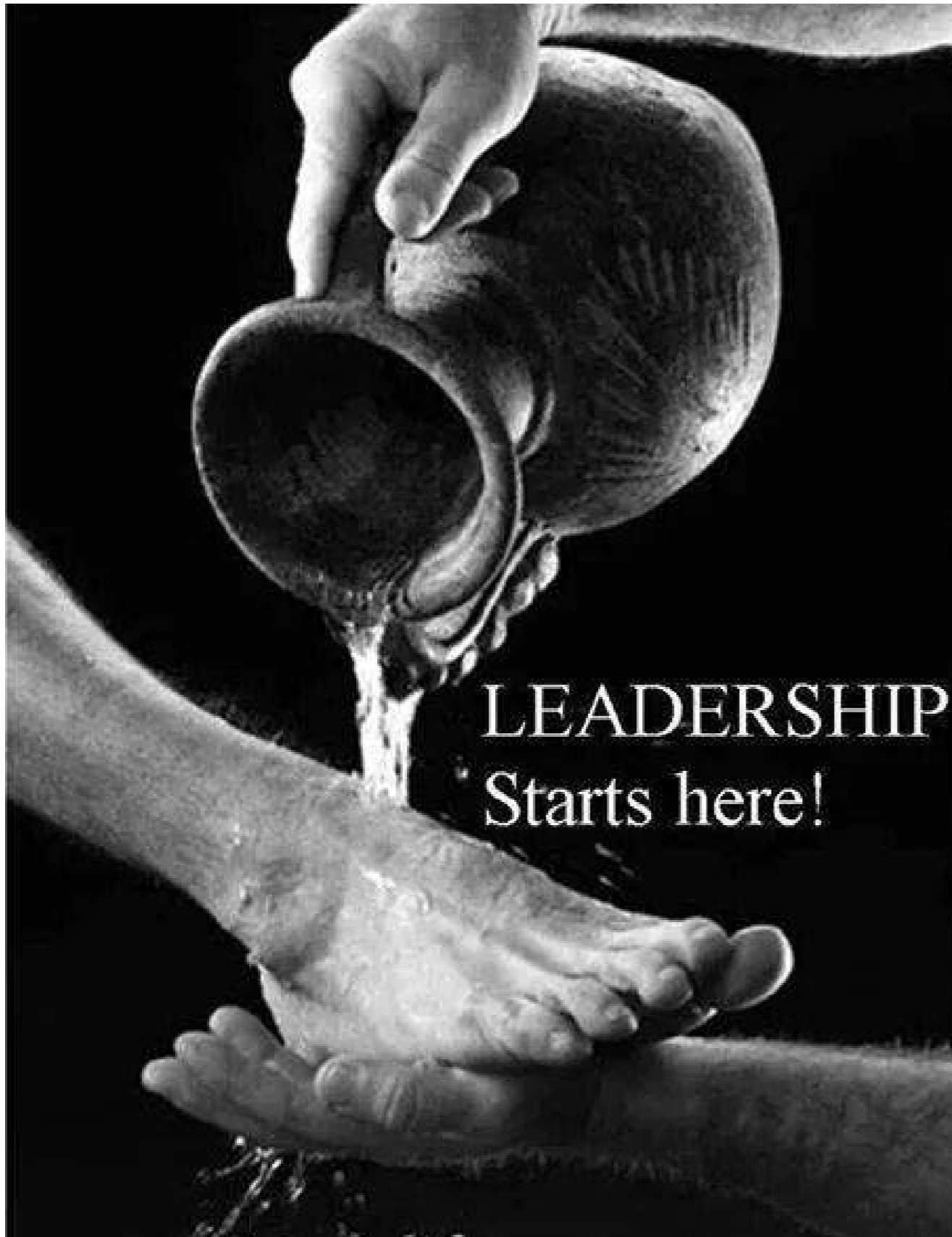

Universal Brotherhood & Sisterhood

“Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves has fulfilled the law...Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:8, 10)

25 April 2021





Do we love enough to truly serve?

All of us are called to fraternal fellowship, to see others as our brothers and sisters in Christ - including the most difficult member in our family, in ministry and in our workplaces - even the poor, the outcast, the downcast, the most abject and ignorant in our society. We are all children of God. All of us, the homeless smelly old person on the roadside, the least intelligent, the special needs children, the lapsed, the crippled, all those whom society rejects and those even rejected and abandoned by their very own families and friends or even by the church itself. We should hold everyone in high regard and esteem, for each human person is made in the image and likeness of God.

During Mass the celebrant takes the cruets filled with water in one and wine in the other and quietly recites these words as he blends the two elements being careful to only add a drop of water into the chalice with a greater amount of wine as he says the formula. This mingling of water and wine symbolises that once blended together, water as the people, and wine as the Blood of Christ, can no longer be separated. (Yet there are many divisions in our church and ministries today, sadly).

“By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity”, are words that not only characterise the theological premise of God inviting us to understand this union but also leads us sinners, to the Paschal Mystery where God’s Plan to share His life and love with us becomes real and opens for each person their own way of the Cross and universal brotherhood & sisterhood.

God wants us to love each other as brothers and sisters of the same Abba, Father, to look at each other tenderly and love them as they are because each is a child of God, who is beloved and adored and because our Lord paid the price for their love with His Blood. *“All that you do to the least of these, you do to me”* (Matthew 25:40).

If we believe that these words are the words of the Incarnate Truth, who also said, *“This is my Body, this is my Blood,”* with what strength we are driven to seek and love Jesus through these lesser ones - the lost, the least and the last, by employing every material and spiritual way as a means to soothe their miseries and to bring unity in our work and in our ministries, in how we serve at home and at work too.



Do I have difficulty accepting those who are different from me or those who go against my own views?



How is my relationship with my family and others who have offended me? Are there long standing resentments?



Do I pray for openness toward others, asking for the grace to love and accept them?



Do I recognise the call of Jesus to go beyond the externals of people, situations and places?

We pray for the grace to overcome all the obstacles on this arduous journey to love our brothers and sisters. All of them! Not only those whom we find easy to love. Let us STOP labelling them at the risk of putting off the spark of our fraternal charity. Let us avoid, like the Covid-19 now, all generalisations by attributing the collective faults or the faults of a few or just one person, to all. Do not let us make the guilt of a fault/crime committed by one of our members reflect the entire group. The Second Vatican Council reprobated this practice with respect to the Jewish people. Let us extend this respect to all. All generalisations commit an injustice which is the source of intolerance, biases, racism. The Lord commanded us not to judge our neighbour. We are so easily prone to notice the faults of others, especially if we suffer from them ourselves, as in the lesson of the speck and log (Matthew 7:5). Charles de Foucauld said, "If I have an uncharitable thought against my neighbour, then I have a similar thought against our Lord Himself, for He said: What you do to one of those little ones you do to me. To turn away from them by judging or ignoring them is to turn away from the Lord.

How can one pray in such a situation? By uniting ourselves to Jesus when we receive Holy Communion and all those that Jesus carries in His Heart. To refuse our love for those human beings near or far is to break this unity that Jesus holds so dear, it is to make a mockery of our Eucharistic Communion.

Lord Jesus, You call us daily to follow You. We ask for your grace to make our hearts like Yours, so that we can love all people. You have taught us to call God "our Father" which means we are all brothers and sisters. Then help us truly be a brother and a sister to our neighbours and not just in our familial context. Help us to obey this mandate. You have said, "obedience is better than sacrifices". All our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving is in vain, if we do not obey this mandate - to love all people, regardless of status and temperament. Grant us the spiritual eye to see beyond our physical appearances so that we can recognise You in all people and not just in the breaking of bread, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Jesus asked us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, so that we may become children of our Father in heaven, for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good as well. Charles de Foucauld often reminded his future disciples about their work of immense and universal charity. He said that in order to love like Jesus, it is pertinent for us to have a new outlook about others, one which goes beyond the surface, a second sight, so to speak. Perhaps he is talking about wearing new spiritual lenses. We all go for eye check up when our vision gets blurred. Perhaps this can also apply to our spiritual sight. Charles de Foucauld said, "To be able to truly see others, we must close our physical eyes and open the eyes of our souls. Let us see what they are from within, and not what they appear to be. Let us look at them in the same way as God looks at them." A tall order? A universal call to brotherhood/ sisterhood.

To be open to receiving all, we must endeavour to rise above, and this involves some measure of pain, instinctual aversions, reactions towards those who may have stepped on our toes, maligned us or misunderstood our good intentions. We are more comfortable with someone with a similar background to us, speaks the same language, holds the same values and convictions, a member of my group, ministry, church. We should always bear witness to our faith by living the gospel values, not the 'values' of the world or prestigious and exclusive groups. Fraternal universal love does not consist of good thoughts, nice words, politically correct interactions or even prayer sessions that touches only surface level but does not come from the heart nor does it show in actions - No! God forbids. What are we doing to soothe temporal and spiritual miseries?



**Well done,
good and
faithful
servant**

"I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink" (Matthew 25:35) is the KPI of our entry to heaven. (KPI in our modern appraisal of work etc means "Key Performance Indicator"). We must show solidarity. We can do it in many different ways, whether we like it or not. This is a mandate of Jesus Himself when He washed His disciple's smelly feet. We need to be in solidarity with family members, our co-workers, neighbours, ministry members, church members and all the people of God. Our solidarity with others will not hold true if based only on emotions and feelings. Solidarity has its roots from the contemplation of the Holy Trinity. The unity that exists between the Father, Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught us the "Our Father" and He used the universal "us" of human solidarity.

We don't say "my" but "our" Father. Loving our neighbour is the royal road which leads to the love of God (inclusive of all we come in contact with daily). It is by loving ALL people that we learn to love God, How can we say we love God when we dislike and hate our neighbour? In one of Charles de Foucauld's meditations, he reflected on what Jesus told him, "The best way to know if we are growing and progressing in divine love and in all virtues is to discover if we are growing in love for our neighbour and in humility. If we are growing in these two aspects, it is proof that we are growing toward perfection."

