

*Jesus sat down and called twelve And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." Mark 9:35*

I still recall—from many years ago—watching Mohammad Ali being interviewed at various times on television, and how he would always confidently assert: "I am the greatest!" And he was—I guess—the top-ranked boxer of the time, no doubt there was some validity to his claim; it's just that such an apparent shortage of humility along with his brazen self-praising style really seemed unbecoming of someone in the public spotlight. That's not the way we teach our children to act, not an example that we would like them to follow.

But I suppose it is well within this world's understanding of what constitutes "greatness."

We look to celebrities and politicians and sports heroes as examples of greatness, as those who have achieved what this world considers to be praiseworthy deeds. Of course, all such fame and acclamation is so shallow and so temporary; it's only a matter of time before worldly acclaim shifts itself to some new recipient.

The disciples in our Gospel reading this past Sunday had some mistaken notions about what greatness consisted of, themselves.

We find that they had been arguing amongst themselves as to which one of them was the greatest. Makes you wonder how and why Jesus put up with them at times, doesn't it? But Jesus went on to answer the question "who is the greatest?" by telling them that it is the one who is willing to serve others, the one who does not glorify himself, but has an attitude of humility and love and concern for those around him.

Of course, Jesus was describing himself here, because none of us fits the description—even on our best days. Jesus willingly gave of himself for our sakes, to the point of laying down his life for us, so that all of our sins might be paid for.

And it is in light of his great love for us that we desire to walk in his footsteps and be expressions of his self-sacrificing love to all those around us in what we say and do.

Who is the greatest? Only our Lord and Savior, who has done such great things for us!