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Francis, the comic strip
People in St. Peter's Square attend Pope Francis' recitation of the Angelus from the window of

People in St. Peter's Square attend Pope Francis' recitation of the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking the square at the Vatican Sept. 19, 2021. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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In God's view, human greatness is measured by how one serves or helps someone who cannot offer anything in exchange, Pope Francis said.

"If we want to follow Jesus, we must follow the path he himself traced out, the path of service. Our fidelity to the Lord depends on our willingness to serve," the pope said before reciting the Angelus prayer Sept. 19 with visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square.

The day's reading from the Gospel of Mark recounted how the disciples were arguing over which of them was the greatest. Jesus admonished them and insisted, "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all."

"If you want to be first, you need to stand in line, be last and serve everyone," the pope said.

Jesus' teaching ran counter to what the disciples and most other people then and today think, he said. "The value of a person no longer depends on the role they have, the work they do, the money they have in the bank. No, no, no, it does not depend on this. Greatness and success in God's eyes are measured differently: They are measured by service. Not on what someone has, but on what someone gives."

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"Do you want to be first?" the pope asked. "Serve. This is the way."

While serving another has a cost, "as our care and availability toward others grows, we become freer inside, more like Jesus," he said. "The more we serve, the more we are aware of God's presence, especially when we serve those who cannot give anything in return — the poor — embracing their difficulties and needs with tender compassion."

After reciting the Angelus, Pope Francis offered prayers for the people in Mexico's Hidalgo state, which experienced severe flooding from heavy rains in early September. He particularly remembered the 17 patients at a hospital in Tula who died when the flooding led to power outages, shutting down oxygen supplies.