July 15th: Memorial of Saint Bonaventure, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Gospel text (*Mt* 23:8-12): Jesus said to his disciples: «You, do not let yourselves be called Master because you have only one Master, and all of you are brothers and sisters. Neither should you call anyone on earth Father, because you have only one Father, he who is in heaven. Nor should you be called leader, because Christ is the only leader for you. Let the greatest among you be the servant of all. For whoever makes himself great shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be made great».

«Let the greatest among you be the servant of all»

Fr. Antonio CARBAJO Porras
(Tinajas, Cuenca, Spain)

Today, the Lord sort of opens parentheses in His words of "attack" to those who say but do not do and do the opposite of what they say. «Let your words teach and your actions speak», said saint Anthony of Padua, also a Franciscan and a doctor as our saint.

«But you are not to be called 'Rabbi' (...); nor are you to be called "instructor" (...) » (Mt 23:8-10): Jesus encourages us to escape from conceit and egotism, and to set our aim to serve our brother, with humility, modesty and meekness.

The Lord does not forbid titles – which may be needed in a hierarchical society - but the spirit of ambition and pride, which can be a consequence of those titles. “We are presidents and servants (...), we only preside if we serve”, said Saint Bernard. And so Saint Bonaventure did, even though he had been appointed to the highest dignities, for he was chosen Bishop and Cardinal.

Neither "teacher", "father", nor "instructor"..., almost synonymous titles which should only be applied to God, and which Jesus emphasizes in this triple synonymy so that we can change them to "humble", "brother" and "servant".

Before our pride to be considered as something, Jesus tells us rather to be something just because of our serving, loving and, in everything, imitating Him to be dispensers of His services, as St. Paul tells us (cf. 1Cor 4.1). He is our only teacher and so are we because our sharing in serving. Jesus emphasizes - and the Saints do remind us - something we should not forget: be humble, be servants saint Bonaventure-style...

Saint Mary is our mother but, first of all, is the mother of God. Well then, her first title – as She says --is

to be "the Lord’s servant” - (Lk 1:38). May we all – her children - imitate her. This will be a good way to tag along the Master.