

Sunday Homily. Aug. 28, 2022

The common theme of today's readings is the need for true humility which leads to a generous blessed sharing with the needy. The readings warn us against all forms of pride and self-glorification. They present humility not only as a virtue but also as a means of opening our hearts, our minds, and our hands to the poor, the needy, the disadvantaged, and the marginalized of society. For Jesus, the daily human needs of the poor are the personal responsibility of every authentic, humble believer. In addition, humility is the mother not only of peace, but also of many virtues, like obedience, fear, reverence, patience, modesty, meekness, and gentleness.

The first reading, taken from the book of Sirach, reminds us that if we are humble, we will find favor with God, and others will love us. The second reading, taken from Hebrews, gives another reason for us to be humble. Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God humbled Himself, taking on human flesh and living our lives so that he might die to save us. He invites his followers to learn how to live from him because he is "meek and humble of heart." Paul reminds us that Jesus was lowly, particularly in his suffering and death for our salvation (Heb 2:5-18), so we should be like him that we may be exalted with him at the resurrection of the righteous. Paul seems to imply that we have to follow Christ's example of humility in our relationships with the less fortunate members of our society.

In today's Gospel, Jesus explains the practical benefits of humility, connecting it with the common wisdom about dining etiquette. Jesus advises the guests to go to the lowest place instead of seeking places of honor so that the host may give them the place they deserve. Jesus' words concerning the seating of guests at a wedding banquet should prompt us to honor those whom others ignore, because if we are generous and just in our dealings with those in need, we can be confident of the Lord's blessings. On the other hand, if we act out of pride and selfishness, we can be sure that our efforts will come to nothing.

St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata gives us her Humility List which explains how to practice humility in our daily life: 1. Speak as little as possible about yourself. 2. Keep busy with your own affairs and not those of others. 3. Avoid curiosity. 4. Do not interfere in the affairs of others. 5. Accept small irritations with good humor. 6. Do not dwell on the faults of others. 7. Accept censures even if unmerited. 8. Give in to the will of others. 9. Accept insults and injuries. 10. Accept contempt, being forgotten and disregarded. 11. Be courteous and delicate even when provoked by someone. 12. Do not seek to be admired and loved. 13. Do not protect yourself behind your own dignity. 14. Give in, in discussions, even when you are right. 15. Choose always the more difficult task.

In her own words, “Learn to be humble by doing all the humble work and doing it for Jesus. You cannot learn humility from books; you learn it by accepting humiliations. Humiliations are not meant to torture us; they are gifts from God. These little humiliations—if we accept them with joy—will help us to be holy, to have a meek and humble heart like Jesus.”

We need to practice humility in personal and social life: Humility is based on the psychological awareness that everything I have is a gift from God and, therefore, I have no reason to elevate myself above others. On the contrary, I must use these God-given gifts to help others. True humility requires us neither to overestimate nor to underestimate our worth. We must admit the truths that we are sinners, that we do not know everything, and that we do not always act properly. Nevertheless, we must also recognize that we are made in the image and likeness of God, and that we are called to help build the kingdom of God with our God-given gifts. We are of value, not because of those gifts, but because we are loved by God as His children, redeemed by the precious blood of His son Jesus. The quality of humility that Jesus is talking about also has a sociological dimension because Jesus is inviting us to associate with the so-called “lower classes” of the society — even the outcasts. Jesus invites us to change our social patterns in such a way that we connect with and serve the homeless, the handicapped, the elderly, and the impoverished — the “street people” of the world — with agápe love.