

HOMILY SUNDAY 22 – C (Homily 02)

“Strive to be Humble”

(Sirach 3:17-20, 28-29; Psalm 68; Heb 12:18-19, 22-24a; Luke 14:1, 7-14)

“Even the biggest ship needs a tug to move it out of the harbor”

Strive to be humble, and let God’s power work in your life.

Rarely do the readings focus so clearly on one specific theme as do the readings today, and that is the theme of humility.

The first reading reminds us that the humble are loved by God; find favor with God, and learn the secrets of God.

The Gospel reveals to us once again the divine reversal of values that is so much of what Jesus consistently taught and lived. We are advised to be humble; to seek the lowest place; to give to the poor with no expectations and we shall be exalted.

According to The New Interpreters Bible, the kingdom of God will bring about a revolutionary reversal of values. The very standards and practices of discrimination will be thrown out. The outcasts will be accepted as equals. Those who live by kingdom values and standards now will not only bear witness to the kingdom but will also be rewarded in the “resurrection of the righteous.” Righteousness, not social position or the esteem of others should be our goal. God does not look on the glitter of our guest list. Instead, God looks to see that we have practiced the generosity and inclusiveness of the kingdom in our daily social relationships.

The second reading, for its part, takes a more indirect approach. Heaven is a spiritual reality, a very gentle reality in contrast to the bombastic nature of the world. We get a sense that even heaven is a humble place.

The Twelve Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous is based on humility. Step One states simply, “Admitted that I was powerless over alcohol, that my life was unmanageable.” To be humble and admit powerlessness, to reach out for help, is the beginning of a process of transformation wrought by working the Steps and entering into the fellowship of AA.

Harsh as it may sound, God cannot work in proud hearts. Suppose a worker took gravel, rocks and water and mixed all that together. What would he get? The answer, of course, is a mess of rocks, water and gravel. Nothing would happen to any of those elements.

Now suppose that same worker crushed the rocks into the grey powder that we buy in bags, and mixed that with gravel and water. What would he get now? The answer, of course, is concrete, which builds amazingly strong structures.

We are like those rocks. As long as we hang onto our false-pride, our self-sufficiency, our refusal to accept our need for any help, then we cannot receive that help, including God's power to work in our lives. God cannot work in proud hearts. The *Magnificat* of Mary is clear on that when it says that God casts down the proud and lifts up the lowly; he fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty.

One canoeist loves to pray in a canoe on a lake when he is at his cottage, especially on calm mornings. He paddles out to the center of a bay, and then lets the canoe drift in the light breeze. It is amazing how sensitive the canoe is to the slightest breeze, sometimes drifting steadily along; sometimes stopping completely, sometimes turning right around depending on the breeze. The sensitivity of the canoe to obeying the gentle pressure of the breeze is a prayer in itself for him, that he might be as humble and open to God's will in his life as is the canoe in which he is praying sensitive to the breeze.

Humility is based on a strong sense of God's love for us, and a strong self esteem flowing from that love. Humility is a quality of life open to persons who know that their worth is not measured by recognition from their peers but by the certainty that God has accepted them.

Corbin Eddy adds that for Jesus, real humility is found in living the meal: living in respect, collaboration and solidarity with all people, with all living things, with all the earth. Real humility is found in being open and ready to share with and to learn from all people, especially those who seem least likely to have something to teach us.

The Eucharist that we celebrate today is a humble meal in which God shares God's love for us through God's Word, and the Body and Blood of Jesus, the humble one.

May our celebration today help us to be humble and to allow God's power to work in our lives.

