

Cycle C 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1 SIR 3:17-18, 20, 28-29

My child, conduct your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts. Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God. What is too sublime for you, seek not, into things beyond your strength search not. The mind of a sage appreciates proverbs, and an attentive ear is the joy of the wise. Water quenches a flaming fire, and alms atone for sins.

Responsorial Psalm PS 68:4-5, 6-7, 10-11

R. (cf. 11b) God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor.

The just rejoice and exult before God; they are glad and rejoice. Sing to God, chant praise to his name; whose name is the LORD.

R. God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor.

The father of orphans and the defender of widows is God in his holy dwelling. God gives a home to the forsaken; he leads forth prisoners to prosperity.

R. God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor.

A bountiful rain you showered down, O God, upon your inheritance; you restored the land when it languished; your flock settled in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided it for the needy.

R. God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor.

Reading 2 HEB 12:18-19, 22-24A

Brothers and sisters: You have not approached that which could be touched and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness and storm and a trumpet blast and a voice speaking words such that those who heard begged that no message be further addressed to them. No, you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and countless angels in festal gathering, and the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.

Gospel LK 14:1, 7-14

On a sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully. He told a parable to those who had been invited, noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at table in the place of honor. A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him, and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say, 'Give your place to this man,' and then you would proceed with embarrassment to take the lowest place. Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, 'My friend, move up to a higher position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Then he said to the host who invited him, "When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

The Scriptures today tell us that God loves us so much that He knows balancing our pride with humility is a problem for us all. The theme of humility is central today. The first reading from Sirach showed how crucial humility is in our relationship with God and others. Sirach was written approximately 180 years before Christ, to keep Jewish traditions alive during a time of Greek cultural influence. This passage shows us that true humility is about knowing our place before God. Sirach's wisdom is still relevant today because humility is essential to our spiritual growth. It's about our relationship with God and others as we value everyone's dignity and strive for a more just society improving the common good.

In the Gospel reading from Luke, Jesus teaches us about true humility and radical hospitality when He tells His hosts to "*invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.*" He is showing the value of being inclusive and charitable. Dining in ancient Middle Eastern culture was more than just eating...It was about honor, status, and giving back. The seating, the guests, and the food all showed one's social level. Jesus knew this and taught a lesson on radical hospitality. In the ancient world, status and honor were key. Jesus flips this by saying the last will be first. He calls us to rethink our values and priorities. In His parable about inviting guests the message is clear: the kingdom of God welcomes everyone, especially those who can't repay kindness. This is not just charity. It's about seeing the dignity of every person. Traditional values say honor is received from others based on our status, and hospitality is about exchange. But, Jesus teaches us that true honor is shown by humbling ourselves and serving others, and radical hospitality is about serving those who cannot repay.

As I mentioned two weeks ago in my homily, I have been thinking a lot about our recent pilgrimage to Portugal, Spain and France where 16 of us became a community of witnesses who journeyed together. Two major stops on our pilgrimage were the Marian shrines of Fatima, Portugal and Lourdes, France. Both obviously were profoundly devoted to Mary. To be honest, experiencing this intense devotion was overwhelming to me...I

know that everything the Blessed Mother does points us to her son Jesus, but at times I found myself missing Jesus. Then I came to realize that what we loved about each place was so different, as each shrine is so different. Fatima felt much more remote. The apparitions of Lucia and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta in 1917 were in very remote places miles from the small hamlet where they lived. The modern town of Fatima was built up around it. Lourdes was different. Bernadette's apparitions occurred just outside of an ancient village, which is still a bustling village with narrow streets. Fatima is massive; Lourdes is even bigger...and yet both have an intimacy that is hard to explain.

What we loved about Fatima was the remote Stations of the Cross that brought us close to Jesus. While it was still somewhat cool, we walked the Stations using "Mary's Way of the Cross" readings and we sang between stations. The outdoor Stations of the Cross wind through the olive and cork trees of the Fatima countryside once frequented by the three shepherd children and their flocks. Easily overlooked were the small plaques printed in the Hungarian language at the base of each Station. Inscribed are the names of the "Hungarians of the free-world" who erected these impressive monuments and cobblestone walkways as a prayer of thanksgiving for the fall of atheistic Communism in Hungary in 1956.

What we loved about Lourdes was the hospital and the loving care for the sick and disabled who were much more prevalent at Lourdes than Fatima. The Accueil Notre Dame (in English, Our Lady of Welcome) 900 bed hospital is in the heart of Lourdes. The building is designed in the form of "open arms", Our Lady of Welcome hospital reminds us that, in Lourdes, everyone is welcomed as a person. The mission of the hospital staff and volunteers is to be sure that the fragile pilgrims will not be disappointed. They are part of the immense chain of solidarity to make sure that everyone, but especially the most vulnerable, can be properly hosted in Lourdes. Being there was all I needed to realize God's love is profoundly present in the world!

In today's readings we penetrated the idea of humility. In a world that loves to brag about itself, humility is a sometimes rare but always most important value. The book of Sirach told us true greatness comes from being humble, not from trying to be the center of attention. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus told us to be humble, especially when we're with others. He is talking about the way we live our lives. He's talking about the way we treat ourselves, others, and God. He's talking about how we not let our pride prevent us from following Jesus every day with His fierce love!