

## 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2016

Readings Sir. 3:17–18,20, 28–29 ; Heb. 12:18–19, 22–24; Gospel: Lk. 14:1, 7–14

One night President Obama and his wife Michelle decided to do something out of routine and go for a casual dinner at a restaurant that wasn't too luxurious. When they were seated, the owner of the restaurant asked the President's Secret Service if he could please speak to the First Lady in private. They obliged and Michelle had a conversation with the owner.

Following this conversation President Obama asked Michelle, "Why was he so interested in talking to you?" She mentioned that in her teenage years, he had been madly in love with her. President Obama then said, "So if you had married him, you would now be the owner of this lovely restaurant," to which Michelle responded, "No. If I had married him, he would now be the President."

That's what they call a well-pounded nail. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled.

From the moment Jorge Cardinal Bergoglio adopted the name "**Francis**" **the world has seen a pope for whom the virtue of humility is primary**. His outward gestures at humility are famous. Rejecting the papal car, he rode back to the St. Martha guesthouse on the bus with his fellow cardinals. The next day he quietly slipped out to pray at the Basilica of St. Mary Major and stopped to pay his hotel bill. The symbolic gestures continued: his permanent residence at the St. Martha Guesthouse, his welcome of trash collectors and cleaners to daily mass, his outreach to the homeless and all those on the margins. These outward gestures preach the gospel of humility in a powerful way to a world hungry for the beauty, truth and goodness of the gospel.

Pope Francis in one of the homilies said, "**Humility, can only get into the heart via humiliation**. There is no humility without humiliation, and if you are not able to put up with some humiliations in your life, you are not humble." It's simply "mathematical," the Pope stresses:

**Does it mean to put ourselves down? Does it mean to think little of ourselves?** Does it mean to deny our true worth? Not at all! Humility is something more profound than that. Humility is not thinking little of ourselves. Humility is not thinking of ourselves at all. In its most profound sense, humility means to be like Jesus, who said, "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

It is easy to misunderstand what humility really is. Being submissive and oppressed by another person is not humility. Being falsely pious and lowly is not humility. Being overly scrupulous in religion is not humility and neither is service to the poor necessarily a sign of humility. Humility is an elusive virtue because if you think you have it you probably don't. Humility is something which can be experienced even if it cannot be explained.

**The best way to understand humility is to first understand pride**. Pride is the vice that counters humility. We often think of arrogance as pride, but that is only a superficial manifestation of pride. At its heart pride is the attitude that I have done nothing wrong and that there is nothing to apologize for. A proud person believes himself or herself to be okay. They honestly see themselves as good and righteous and not in need of help. A self-sufficient person is proud. A self-righteous person is proud. Anyone who believes himself right and good is proud. The proud person is pictured in the gospel by the person who says, "I thank you God that I am not like that sinner over there..."

**Humility means to be like Jesus**, who said, "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve." Mark 10:45 Humility means to live as Jesus lived--not for ourselves but for others. It means to use our talents and gifts as Jesus used his—not for ourselves and our own glory but for others and their needs.

There's a story about three people who were discussing recent translations of the Bible. The first person said, "I like the New American translation that we read at Mass. It has modernized the language without sacrificing reverence for God's word." The second person said, "I like the Jerusalem Bible that we read in our Bible study group. It has poeticized the language without sacrificing the meaning of God's word." The third person said, "I like my **mother's translation of the Bible**. She has translated the Bible into life and made it live by her example. Her translation is the best translation of all."

That story sums up the challenge that Jesus sets before us in today's gospel. Jesus challenges us to translate God's word into everyday life. He challenges us to live the Bible. He challenges us to make the Bible live. He challenges us to use our talents and gifts not for ourselves and our own glory but for others and their needs. This is the challenge that Jesus sets before us in today's readings. This is the challenge that he holds out to us in today's liturgy.

**Let's close with St. Ignatius' Prayer for Generosity:** "Lord, teach me to be generous. "Teach me to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labor and not to ask for reward, except to know that I am doing your will."