

30 Sunday in Ordinary Time©

In the World today, we are told, You gotta be loud, you gotta be Proud, you have to be #1.... But What does Jesus tell us?

Unfortunately, in the world today, the Virtue of Humility seems to have lost its luster.

In the gospel, we are first introduced to the contrast of humility, the pompous arrogant Pharisee. I visualize him as standing front and center of the Temple area, where all can see him. He probably has his head cocked up, and his hands dramatically raised as he proclaims to himself, "Thank you God, that I am so AWESOME!!!! And notice.... That he is not really acknowledging God for any of his Awesomeness, instead he's breaking his arm patting his own back for the wonderful things HE does.

When Pope Francis commented on this parable, he said that one who "prays" with arrogance and self-righteousness is NOT praying to God at all, but "speaking to a mirror.

But, one who prays with humility and awareness of his or her sin..... speaks to God.

So, now let's look at the Tax Collector. He manifests humility in four separate ways, which taken together, earn him justification. He stands off at a distance; He keeps his eyes lowered; he beats his breast as a sign of repentance, and finally... He cries out for Mercy.

He embodies humility, and the Pope goes on to say that God has a "weakness" for humility. Before a humble heart, God opens his heart completely. And isn't that what the Psalmist is saying? "The Lord hears

the cry of the poor. And Sirach notes that the prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds.

The value of humility was also not wasted on The Holy Father of my monastic order, St. Benedict. In fact his longest chapter in the Holy Rule, is on humility. He envisions it as a ladder, such as Jacob saw in his dream, reaching to the height of heaven. And the only way to ascend the ladder is to humble oneself. Likewise, if one praises himself, he slides down on the ladder.

This sounds a lot like Jesus' own words closing his parable, "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

St. Benedict then goes on to define each one of these steps on his ladder, of which there are 12. I guess Chapter 7 of the Holy Rule was the first 12-step program.

They include such things as obedience, foregoing one's own will, confession of faults, silence and so forth. No monk gets through the novitiate without careful study of Chapter 7, so that, to quote the Rule, "...after ascending all these steps of humility, the monk will quickly arrive at that perfect love of God which casts out fear. Through this love, all that he once performed with dread, he will now begin to observe without effort, as though naturally, from habit, no longer out of fear of hell, but out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue.

I think my favorite display of True Humility was enacted in the movie "McFarland". Anybody see that one? It's based on a true story about a high school coach who was busted down out of any respectable high school and ended up in Mid-Valley California, where most of his

students were kids of the people who worked the fields in the Valley. The kids also worked the fields themselves when necessary and as a consequence were very fit, and MAN.... Could they run fast.

The Coach ends up putting together a Cross Country Team and is able to discipline those kids into a descent team. Nobody from this school has ever really amounted to much, but the guys actually make it to the Regional Finals, and have a chance to take the school to the State Cross Country Finals Championship Race. After the Regional Race is over and they are tallying up the scores , the last qualifying team to go to state is.... That right!!! You guessed it!!!! McFarland!!!

The Coach starts jumping up and down, and yelling, “We’re going to State!! We’re going to State!!” and turns to the team to start celebrating with them... only to find all seven of them in a circle, down on one knee, Thanking God, for what His gift has allowed them to do.

They could have been Loud and Proud, and actually did go on to become #1 in the State by winning the Final Race..... But instead, they humbly acknowledged it as a gift from God.

I’d like to close with two final quotes from Pope Francis. His first words to echo through St. Peter’s square after he was elected Pope, one of the most powerful and prestigious positions on the planet. He said, “I am a sinner..... and the last thing he said to America in his closing Mass in Philadelphia several years, “Please pray for me....don’t forget.”

May all of us sinners not forget to pray.... Humbly.... For one another.

Amen.