

Commentary to the 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

How to Enter Narrow Gate



Message: Nothing is more beautiful than humility because it opens a person to others and to God. This is the third homily in our mini-series on youth challenges. The first week focused on the cross. Not only are we saved by Jesus' cross; we will never find fulfilment or peace unless we embrace the cross. Last week we saw the Narrow Gate. We learned from Pope Francis about obstacles to entering the Narrow Gate: self-superiority, looking down on others and the paralysis of shame. We can overcome these obstacles only when we let go of fear and open ourselves to Jesus. He himself is the Narrow Gate.

This Sunday we learn how to enter the Narrow Gate. We receive the key to the relationship with Jesus - and with other people. You probably already know what the key is. We see it in today's readings: humility. "My son, conduct your affairs with humility and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts." Humility enables us to have a relationship with others.

And as Jesus indicates in the Gospel, without humility we cannot have a relationship with God. To enter the wedding banquet - and heaven will be a glorious banquet with Jesus as Bridegroom and the Church as his bride - to enter the wedding banquet, says Jesus, "take the lowest place." Pope Francis gives three steps to humility:

First, self-forgiveness. This is a tricky concept. It might sound like giving oneself a free pass. But Pope Francis explains it this way. "We need to learn to pray over our past history, to accept ourselves, to learn how to live with our limitations, and even to forgive ourselves." Pope Francis clarifies that we need to forgive ourselves, "in order to have this same attitude towards others."

Self-forgiveness has to lead to forgiving others. That's the second step to humility. Pope Francis tells

us to never let a day end without making peace in the family. "And how am I going to make peace?" he asks. "By getting down on my knees?" The pope answers, "No! Just by a small gesture, a little something and harmony with your family will be restored. Just a little caress, no words are necessary. But do not let a day end without making peace in your family." So, forgiving oneself and forgiving others.

There's a third step to humility, one we often overlook. It's a word that has fallen out of use - courtesy! Courtesy, says Pope Francis, "is a school of sensitivity and disinterestedness." That's a hard word. It means to put one's own interests aside and focus on the other person. Courtesy means to learn "how to listen, to speak and at certain times, keep quiet." Courtesy, like forgiveness, is humility in action. Nothing is more beautiful than humility because it opens a person to others and to God - to listen to him, to speak and at times to keep quiet.

Let's fix in our minds the words of our first reading: "My son, conduct your affairs with humility and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts."

Fr Phil Bloom