

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Sep 28th 2014

Today's second reading, a passage from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians, contains a hymn that early Christians presumably sung as they gathered to celebrate the Eucharist. The hymn expresses a fundamental reality of our Christian lives: that Jesus is God and at the same time Jesus is a human being.

Paul's message to the Philippians is that they are to imitate Christ's humility, "he humbled himself . . . even to his cruel death on the cross." Paul is saying to them in effect, 'this is how Christ lived his life – now you Philippians (and you and me in the twenty-first century) go out and do the same for others – imitate the humility of Christ'. What a wonderful challenge.

Jesus' humility led him to undertake the mission from God to be the savior of humankind. Jesus, Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, becomes like us in all things and makes it possible for us to enter into an ongoing relationship with God.

In many respects, humility is a forgotten virtue in a world that tells us that success, wealth and power are what we need to pursue. And that the humble folks are fools. So what is humility and how does it operate in our lives as Christians today?

Many of us learned a kind of half-humility that led to seeing ourselves as not-quite-good-enough. That attitude is clearly not productive in any part of our lives, especially in our relation with God. Humility is the opposite of the I'm no good attitude. That's what is meant by false humility.

Spiritual writers tell us that humility is truth: recognizing God as God; that I am not god; and that one of the deepest calls we have is to recognize God is the giver of all the good gifts we are endowed with. The truth of our lives in Christ is our giftedness and the persistence to humbly use our gifts for others. Gifts are not meant for us alone but, like God's own actions, to be shared with those who call it out of us.

We all know people of true humility. They are those rare ones that make us feel good about ourselves and make us happy that we know them. They are the Christed ones that make a difference in our world. And they do it quietly and humbly. That's what Paul is challenging the Philippians to – look to Christ and BE like him especially in his humility

Lord, teach me humility. Give me the grace to acknowledge you in the many gifts that you have showered on me. YOU are in those gifts and through them let me be grateful that you called me into your own wonderful light. Help me to give back to you the gifts that you've given me for service of others as you served so magnificently in your life, death and resurrection. Teach me your humility.

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