



Homily for 9/1/2019

22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

Rev. J. David Carter, JCL

*Humbly before the Lord under One Roof*

For nearly seven weeks, we have been coming to Sts. Peter and Paul, prepared to take up the lowest seat at the Banquet of the Mass. Literally, we went downstairs, to the lowest place on our campus and had Mass in the basement. That basement became our ark, our catacomb, our refuge from the dust and fumes of floor refinishing. It was a humble substitute for the beautiful Basilica that we rejoice in today. But humility is a virtue – and the chief one expounded in today’s readings. *Humility* comes from the Latin word for dirt or ground. The humble are lowly, like those next to the ground. The humble are grounded. But, Jesus says, “the one who humbles himself will be exalted,” and so I announce to you with the words of today’s Gospel, news of great joy, “My friend, move up to a higher position.” What a great opportunity for us, as we move back into our beloved sanctuary for the second time in a year, to not forget to give thanks to God for this great Grace! We should never take it for granted. Every time we enter this beautiful edifice, it is part of our duty to do what this building was built to remind us to do: give great thanks for the awesome and beautiful mystery of God’s love for us!

These readings reminded me of the Rule of St. Benedict which our Lay Oblates read at our monthly meetings here. In particular, St. Benedict, in Chapter 7, lays out his 12 Steps to Humility. These steps have been practiced by monks and laity alike for 15 centuries in the pursuit of holiness. But they are challenging to come to terms with. Perhaps that is what we need to hear. Here are the steps that St. Benedict gave, in a brief summary I found by Dr. Brant Pitre:

- Step 1: Obeying all of God’s commandments. In other words, act like God is God and you’re not.
- Step 2: Don’t bother to please yourself. In other words, don’t take the best seat at church. Don’t take the biggest slice of pie. Whatever it might be, seek the lowest position for yourself. Whatever your inclination is to please yourself, go against that, go the opposite. Seek the lower place.
- Step 3: Obedience to your superior, in the religious life or to parents in the home.
- Step 4: Patient and quiet perseverance of everything inflicted on you by others. In other words, no complaining. If you meet somebody who complains all the time, you can basically rest assured that they’re not humble.
- Step 5: Humble and thorough confession of your sins and faults. There is nothing more humbling and humiliating than the Sacrament of Confession.
- Step 6: The acceptance of crude and harsh tasks. No grumbling. If you’re a parent, and you have to change another diaper, just do it. Grumbling is also a sign of pride: not to accept those things that are crude or difficult.
- Step 7: Don’t only confess that you are inferior to others, that other people are better than you, but really believe it in your heart. Start to see everyone else’s virtues as greater than yours. And don’t just say you think that’s the case, but learn to believe it.
- Step 8: Strict observance of a Rule of Life. So, Benedict here is talking to his monks who have rule to follow: it’s a form of obedience. The same thing could be true, though, within the family, like certain rules for the household. Follow a rule of life as a way of conquering your will for the greater common good of family life or work or whatever it might be, the duties of your state in life.
- Step 9: The practice of silence. Only speak when necessary. People who never stop talking are usually not very humble, because they think what they have to say is so important that everyone needs to hear it.
- Step 10: Restraint from [excessive] laughter and frivolity. It’s very similar to “talking too much”. A lot of times jokes and laughter are wonderful, bring lots of joy, but it’s also real easy for it to become a temptation to draw attention to yourself. Showing restraint in those things is very important.
- Step 11: Speaking few words, simply and seriously. Being a person of few words is also an act of humility, restraint.



Step 12: Showing humility in your heart and in your appearance and actions. In other words, don't just think about yourself in humble ways, but actually live it out. Show it both interiorly and exteriorly. Don't just talk the talk, walk the walk as well, the path of humility.

I have a long way to go, for sure, in following St. Benedict's 12 step path to Humility! But we as a community are also humbled by the fact that this is a house that gathers lots of God's children under one roof together. About half of our parish are Spanish-speaking immigrants from Guatemala. The other half are English-speaking people from many backgrounds. But we are united in our one, holy, Catholic and apostolic faith. What a wonderful thing it was to see both our English-speaking and Spanish-speaking communities come out to help us move back in to the Basilica! Many people were giving of their time and talent to clean all the pews, floors, stations of the cross, vestibule and more. This is a way that our parish is growing in unity. But this growing in unity is often a painful and humbling thing too.

Another way we are growing in unity is in the manner in which we celebrate the Sacraments here at the Basilica. I am trying to address with fairness and equity the different ways in which the Sacraments are celebrated, keeping in mind the needs of many, the difficulties of scheduling the use of the church, and the limitations of the clergy. For instance, only a few weeks ago I proposed our new policy on communal baptisms twice a month to celebrate the first incorporation into the Body of Christ as something done in common, rather than as separated and individual families. It also remedies the injustice of not offering individual baptisms to our many Hispanic families. This means a change in practice and expectations, but I ask you to prayerfully consider it in the context of St. Benedict's Rule and the Gospel message today.

In a like manner, I am expressing my mind and vision, which you can find in the pastor's notes this Sunday, on our oneness in the celebration of another Sacrament of Initiation - First Holy Communion. The ideal is for our parish to be united on the day in which our young people approach the altar for the very first time to receive the Precious Body and Precious Blood of Our Savior. I know that this is a difficult transition and that there are lots of things to still work out, but I am asking for the parish's support in realizing this Catholic ideal of unity, especially when it comes to the Sacrament of Unity, the Eucharist. It will take humility on the part of all, including myself, to hear everyone and to respond as best I can as a good father to many and diverse children. So, I am glad that the Lord, in His Providence, has given us these readings today. As we approach the banquet of salvation, let us take the humble approach and rejoice when the Lord calls us, his friends, to come up higher on the last day!