

2019.10.27 Homily

Through today's Gospel parable Jesus calls us to real humility.

The Pharisee thinks he is so wonderful, because he compares himself to the rest of humanity and the tax collector, and only sees their faults: like being grasping, unjust, adulterous and so on. So he only focuses on people's weaknesses and sins, and ignores the goodness that is in every human being. At the same time he doesn't mention any of the good things that he has done to God or man, except paying tithes on all he gets and following the rules, as if you could buy God's favour by money and buy following the rules. He doesn't think of questions, such as 'what did I do for the sake of my relationship with God?' 'Did I thank him and praise him for his blessings to me?' 'Did I make sacrifices for Him and his beloved people out of love?' Of course he didn't ask these questions, because he never really believed in God as a loving and merciful Father, but rather as a judge, or a distant concept. So through the Pharisee's attitude Jesus presents the psychology of pride. This sounds like the way some Christians also think: I am fine, because I didn't hurt anybody, I didn't break the rules, I didn't commit adultery, etc. so I have nothing to apologise for, but at the same time you just didn't care actively about those whom God loves, so something was seriously not ok. The big question is 'Do you believe in God who is a merciful, loving parent, who calls you as His beloved son or daughter, and do you believe He wants to show His love through you to your neighbour, who happen to be His beloved sons and daughters?' Because if you would ask similar questions you would evaluate and consider yourself and your actions differently, from God's angle, and not from your own, **and you wouldn't be so proud of yourself?** Notice also that the Pharisee is not talking to God, as you should do in a prayer, but actually to himself. So he himself is his own God. We also tend to see things and ourselves only from our own point of view, instead of asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to us who God really is and having built up a personal relationship with the Father we would have a more humble approach to prayer.

The tax collector on the other hand seems to know God better. He seems to have had a taste of God's merciful love, and considers himself in the light of God's goodness, love and mercy, and that's why he dares to pray to God **himself**. This is where true humility begins; with recognising God's goodness,

love and mercy and considering ourselves and our actions in that light. The more you know God as your loving and merciful Father the more you will know yourself and bow before him. Remember when Peter and his companions realised the goodness of God in Jesus at the first miraculous catch of fish Peter threw himself at Jesus' feet and said: 'leave me Lord, for I am a sinner' (Luke 5:8). God regards the humble and bends down towards them (cf. Ps 138:6; 113:6).

We also experience God's supporting grace when we bear our suffering with humility and go through difficult times with patience. St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians encourages all of those who are humble with these words: 'My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness' (2 Cor 12:9).

St. John the Baptist is another great example to me, because he didn't seek the approval of men; **although he wore rough camel cloth, lived in the desert, and had a great number of follower, he had the greatest treasure in his heart, the gift of the Holy Spirit.** So when Jesus appeared publically inspired by the Spirit John humbly stepped back and gave way to him, saying: I must decrease and He must increase (John 3:30).

Thus respect, love and admiration for Jesus increased among the people, but He didn't care about that, but it mattered to him more what the Father's plan and will was, so he humbled himself, washed the feet of his disciples, accepted the cup of suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, and then let himself be treated like the last of all humankind and in the end undertook His humiliating death on the cross.

However, this is not the end, because Jesus promises that 'whoever humbles himself will be exalted' (Mt 23:12), just as He was exalted by the Father who raised him from the dead high above all Heavens.

So if you want to be truly humble, and not just shy, first seek to know how truly God loves you, and soaked in His love and mercy consider yourself, your life and actions with His eyes, **and then you will truly be humble.**