



Twenty second Sunday Ordinary time

Sirach 3:17-20, 28-29; Heb 12:18-24; Luke 14: 1,7-14

The first reading and the Gospel today both speak of humility.

The wise teacher says, "A person who is humble is loved more than someone who is generous with gifts." And again, "God who is greatness itself is glorified by humble people."

Humility is an attitude of the heart, a way of being. The word comes from humus, earth. To be humble is to be grounded to be true to who we really are.

In the book of Genesis we are reminded that we are of the earth and that we will return to the earth. This reminder was timely particularly in the light of the tower of Babel story because humans wanted to be free of their earthiness. From time to time over the history of humankind people have preached that we are made up of two natures, one bodily and the other spiritual, and that we must try to live by denying our bodies.

We are not divided, we are beings in the image of God capable of extraordinary deeds. Humility is not the denigration of ourselves but the acceptance of ourselves. Much of what we hear, see and read in the media uses our dissatisfaction with ourselves to sell products. We are told that certain clothes, cars, gadgets etc. will transform our lives.

The only change that will make our lives better is a change of heart. The only way we have of not being disturbed by every passing fancy is to be anchored, earthed. Humility keeps us real. We recognise those who pretend to be more than they are...

Once Jesus was invited to the home of a rich person for a meal. Jesus, whom we know was good at observing what was going on in his community, saw that some people when they went into the dining room were pushing and shoving so he had this to say. "When you are invited to a wedding, do not head straight for the top table."

Imagine your embarrassment if an usher has to ask you to move. Rather take an ordinary place and if you are acknowledged it will increase your standing. Not everybody is as crude as the guest in Jesus' example but we often misrepresent ourselves either by imagined importance or by false humility. Jesus invites us to examine our behaviour. Nature offers us

endless examples of how differences contribute to the beauty of the landscape.

Later Jesus had a few words for the host. "When you're having another dinner don't just invite family, wealthy neighbours or people who are considered celebrities. What about including those who never get invited out, they won't be able to return the invitation but you will be like God whose table is open to all."

What a challenge! We don't what the host said, but if he took Jesus seriously his life would have been transformed.

Every story in the scriptures that is about food reminds us of the Eucharist. It is a call to reflect on how we come to the table. In the light of these stories we could ask- Is there any jostling for position in our Eucharistic communities?

Is everyone welcome or do we have a very select "guest list"?

Being honest and grounded gives glory to God more than fine arguments.

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