

Homily: 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday Cycle A: 2023: Ez 18: 25-28; Ps 25; Phil 2: 1-11; Mt 21: 28-32

***“Living Humbly in an Era of great Pride and for the Conversion of Souls”***

1. St. Paul tells us today, *“Do nothing out of selfishness or vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also for those of others.”* **Humility is recognition of our true condition of dependence on God.** We are called today to humility of heart and life. St. Paul then goes on to compose his beautiful prayer or hymn to Jesus’ humility. *Jesus is in the form of God but emptied Himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men, humbling Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a Cross.* Jesus truly practiced what He preached when He said to us in the Gospel: “The person who humbles himself will be exalted and whoever exalts himself will be humbled” (Luke 14:11, 18:14; Mt 23:12). But becoming more humble is a daily battle for us human beings because the primary effect of original sin, of which we all suffer from is: **pride** – which is so evident in the current era in our country/world with so many fighting with each other because of the attitude: *I won’t be disrespected, or I will show them – never back down from anyone*, etc. It is a recipe for moral and spiritual disaster on the individual level and a destruction of any notion of the common good for all.
2. **So how do we go in the opposite direction amid this wave of pride and selfishness and grow in the virtue humility?** **First**, we need to pray daily for this gift, to make St. John the Baptist’s utterance our own, *“Jesus must increase and I must decrease.”* **Second**, we need to have a proper love or esteem for ourselves. Not too much: *conceit*, a form of pride; not too little: *despair* which is reverse pride. We need to honestly access our strengths and weaknesses of character in light of Jesus’s love and truth. So, few are willing to do that today when ppl in their pride say outwardly: ***“I don’t regret anything.”*** Really you fool?! Yes, we need to have confidence, but not in our own gifts and abilities apart from Jesus, but IN Jesus and in His love for us: that is the source of our identity and “self-esteem.” We can’t act like we have no weaknesses - when reality shows and other people know quite the contrary! God calls us to adopt the

attitude of the publican rather than the Pharisee (see Luke 18: 9-14): *be merciful to me a sinner, Lord*; instead of comparing ourselves to others and thinking we are better than them. **But we also need to admit: yes, we are sinners!** The only one we should be comparing ourselves to is Jesus! If we can get out of the excessive self-esteem fantasy - that our world promotes, *starting in pre-school school and going all the way thru the entitlement mentality fostered in college and graduate school – the most recent manifestation of this grave moral/spiritual error is the transgender identity confusion ideology* - which is causing so much harm to young people mentally/emotionally and spiritually and leading to some even mutilating their bodies with the sinister “encouragement” of authority figures in their lives - then we can experience the joy of knowing God’s love for us despite our sins and confusion; although, **remember He calls us in love to change for the better, to grow in His holiness -with His help, of course.** When we focus on Jesus more, we also start to become free of the **enslavement of worrying constantly** what other people think of us, and not in an arrogant way of saying and acting like so many people today: *I have no regrets, and I don’t give a bleep what others think.* No, as disciples of the living God we have the **humility** to want to set a good example for others, but what they think of us in the end really doesn’t matter - because God alone is the One who is the Judge of the living and of the dead – but we acknowledge this in humility rather than pride. **If we please Him: it’s all good! If we displease Him, it’s all bad!**

3. Finally, **how do we know in fact that we are growing in humility?** As Jesus says in the Gospel, *by their fruits, you will know them.* The fruit of humility is love: we begin to love God and our neighbor more deeply, even when we don’t feel like it. You know you are growing in humility in relation to God if there is a desire in your heart to go to the Sacrament of Confession more frequently than in the past. You know you are growing in humility if you stop telling people and yourself that you are a good person, or “*what do I have to confess, I haven’t killed anyone?*” We are growing in humility if we truly are concerned about our neighbor’s soul and offering daily prayer & penance for them. If we are humble,

we don't just presume everyone is going to Heaven. We hope that everyone ends up there - even if through the final purification in Purgatory for humans who are not yet saints when they leave this world, but also are not in the state of obstinate moral sin - but realize we must generously pray and offer our daily trials, tribulations, and sufferings and active acts of penance and reparation for our neighbor's conversion as well as our own, per Our Lady of Fatima's urgent request for over 100 years now! As our Lady reminds us at all of the Church's approved apparitions of hers: Guadalupe, Lourdes, Fatima, LaSalette, Akita, Champion, Wisconsin - **the time for conversion is short** = *don't play around with your soul and the souls of others!* Let's remember that, esp. as we honor the Blessed Mother in a special way in the month of October and hopefully daily act upon Mary's request for prayer and penance and reparation, under her mantle of everlasting love, to help her lead souls to Jesus and salvation, especially by pointing them to the treasure of all treasures our Catholic Faith. Let me know if you know anyone who is interested in becoming Catholic, and I will try to help them any way I can and put them in touch with our RCIA team. God bless you.