

[Readings: Sir. 3:17-18, 20, 28-29; Ps. 68; Heb. 12:18-19, 22-24a; Lk. 14:1, 7-14]

We might have a misunderstanding about what genuine humility is. Too often this is misunderstood as being unassuming or being self-loathing

Neither of those are actually signs of humility. Humility comes as a result of a **grateful heart** and a **servant spirit**. If a person is not thankful, then they believe that all they have is a result of their own hard work, which is never the case. We are able to accomplish what we do because others are willing to work with us or have done so much before us. Humility starts with a **grateful heart**.

It is kind of like the running back in football who after scoring the touchdown only points to himself. He forgets the men who blocked the players on the other team that allowed him to score; or the person who graduates from school and is not thankful for the efforts of the teachers, administrators, workers at the school and donors who have given them their example of sacrifice.

Being mindful of the contribution of others, especially of God, keeps our perspective in the right place and makes us humble. The same can be said of a **servant spirit** as an attitude to life. Here too, a humble person is able to recognize that greatness comes from my ability to make others great around me rather than simply to make myself look great. Though I may accomplish greatness personally, my positive impact will only affect myself and will end with my death. When I impact the lives of others in a positive way, then the true power of my life is seen long after I have died. The focus on the benefit of others is a key element to true humility.

Rarely is generosity offered in proportion to possessions. Instead, the most generous are often those with fewer resources. We give, not according to our means, but in response to our gratitude. Too often, the more we have, the more we credit ourselves with our hard work and resourcefulness.

We are a unique parish in that folks with great resources do give generously to our parish, especially when there is a special need. You have grateful hearts and a servant spirit. Our Christian Service Director, Renee' Heileman, often comments on how generous the people are at St. Martin de Porres Parish. I know whenever I have asked for additional financial help, someone always comes forward to provide it. [CSA... CSA... CSA...!]

If you're going to a party, with the right people, then you want to make sure that you fit in. You want to be able to walk in, converse eloquently with the prim and proper, dress for success and sit in the right place. The closer you are to the guest of honor, the one to whom you're courting favor, the better.

This is the logic of the world. How dreadful it'd be to show up underdressed, and underprepared. First impressions matter. And there's business to be done.

As we hear from our Lord Jesus, God operates out of a strange logic. Jesus attends a dinner. Everyone is determining where they'll sit. Who will sit next to the guest of honor? Who will be relegated to the kids' table, far away from the honored guest?

If we examine our motives truthfully, we'd probably put ourselves at a seat of some importance (but not the most importance). It'd be uncouth to presume that we are the most important person present. But at the same time, surely we're more important than him. Than her. Than them.

So Jesus tells us this parable: There is a wedding banquet. Don't take the highest place, the seat where you're most likely to court favor. Instead, assume the lowest place. If the host sees you, and believes that you've placed yourself too low, then you'll be raised to a higher seat!

Good news, right? All we have to do is to assume a certain fake humility. Yes, I am not worthy to sit there. Yes, I am not as important as that one. Yes, the Lord will notice and invite me higher. Not so fast, proclaims Jesus.

The banquet of the kingdom of God is not about courting favor with the important, operating out of a false hubris that is really an opportunity to recognize our self-importance. If we are to hold a banquet, we should not invite the important. We should not invite those who we hope might advance our cause before Congress or in the Vatican. We should invite the poor. The crippled. The lame. Those who can't repay, who can't use their importance to increase our status. The banquet, as it turns out, is pure gift, pure joy, pure delight.

In reality, this is the banquet that the Church hosts each week. It is the banquet of the Eucharist, the mystery of Christ's body and blood.

We don't invite the self-important, those who are seeking to be seen by their neighbor as righteous. We invite the entire Church to eat at the Eucharistic altar, to discover a love that comes as pure gift. There are no places of honor. There are no places of prestige.

Those who dine at this banquet should learn the logic of this most peculiar of banquets. The Eucharistic hospitality offered to us by our Lord Jesus, who invites us to the supper of the Lamb, should pass over into our homes.

We welcome the hungry child, the lonely friend, the neighbor in need. We offer this hospitality not because anyone will notice. Likely, they won't.

We offer it because we have learned to assemble our guest list from Jesus Christ. It is a guest list of the lost, the lonely, the hungry, and the thirsty.

We welcome these guests not in bitterness, not in the sense of our self-righteousness.

Rather, like Jesus Christ, we welcome because we delight in their presence.

We delight, because the misfit banquet, in the end, is the one where we belong.

Your reflection questions for this week:

How do I maintain a sense of healthy humility? Who helps me keep my head on straight? What do I do to avoid the twin pitfalls of self-promotion or self-loathing? Can I accept that I am a "good-enough" human being?

In the banquet of life, am I more likely to simply enjoy the feast, or do I get trapped into not enjoying myself until I see who's got the place of honor and learn where I fit in the pecking order? What keeps me from simply being present for the "festal gathering"?

Take a risk. Rearrange your table tonight or sometime this week. Who's going to sit at YOUR table? WHERE are they going to sit? Sing THEIR praises instead of your own. And be ready to grow in humility and faith. AMEN!