

## 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2010

All creatures live and enjoy life, but each one according to its category and family of being. What makes human life different from that of beasts and other creatures is, among other things, the practice of virtues. Without virtue human beings would lead a kind of life that is simply emotional, instinctive and irrational.

The readings of this Sunday invite us to meditate on the virtue of humility and the role it plays in the building of human relationships and the flourishing of our relationship with God.

In the first reading, Sirach reminds us that humility attracts human sympathy and God's favor upon us. Those who are prideful are full of pretensions and ignore wise counsel, because they are always in pursuit of things beyond their strength. The right attitude, however, should be that the greater one is, the more has one to humble himself/herself.

This teaching finds its application in today's Gospel through the words of Jesus. From the outset, we have this wonderful scene of Jesus invited to dine in the home of one of the leading Pharisees. As he observed that people were choosing just the places of honor at the table, he told them a parable that has to do not only with the good table manners, but also teaches us something about the kingdom of heaven.

First of all, Jesus speaks to the guest. To be a guest at the table of someone is, indeed, an honor, but it has to be accompanied with humility. Otherwise the guest runs the risk of being ashamed or embarrassed for having taken a place that was not his/hers in the banquet. Instead of jumping to the first table, it is, rather, wise to take a lower place so that the host may eventually honor the guest by inviting him/her to a place of honor. That is why Jesus reminds us that everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but whoever humbles himself will be exalted. This is true especially when it is the about the kingdom of heaven.

This proposal is very challenging, because our human nature likes honor, praise and recognition. A dinner, for instance, is an appropriate place where we want to be recognized and given the rank we deserve in society. For that reason, there is a resistance coming from within that tells us: "Why shall we not receive an honor we deserve? What is wrong with being acknowledged in such a gathering?"

Remember that the problem is not just about acknowledgment, but our attitude in these gatherings. What Jesus wants us to realize is that we are just simple human beings like any other. Therefore, whatever might be our position or rank, we have to be humble. In that perspective, whatever we might know, it is not only little compared to the sum of all knowledge; but it is also limited to the domain of our specialization. Whatever we might have achieved in life, all that is nothing in the end. As important as we might be now, in the end we become like anybody else, for instance when we retire or die.

After having spoken to the guest, Jesus speaks to the host. To be a host and giver of a dinner to people is certainly a big privilege and an honor, but such a gesture should be

disinterested. The main reason why it should be so lies in the fact that when we offer things or a dinner to people who cannot repay us back, we make friends in heaven. Those who cannot repay us back now are certainly people who will support us when the time of judgment will come up at the end of time.

What is behind this statement is the conviction that God is hidden in the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, the handicapped, the needy, etc. When we help these people, it is God himself we sustain with our material means. As God is the creator of everything we have in this world, he will certainly repay us at the resurrection of the righteous.

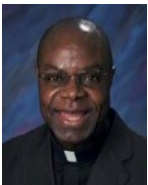
As said, all this is beautiful. However, we have to be careful about the motivation that drives our acts of generosity. It may happen that we give to God and to others in the same way we do with our income tax. If our gift is just a satisfaction of a duty, we miss Jesus' point.

It may happen that we give to God and to others purely out of self-interest as an investment in God's account book. If our generosity is such a rationalized selfishness, we miss Jesus' point.

It may happen that we give to others in order to feel superior. If our generosity is just an act of condescension, we better not give, because not only do we miss Jesus point, but it is also cruel.

It may happen that we give to others because we cannot help it. If that is the case, such a gift is done out of love and satisfies Jesus' vision. That is why we should never regret a good deed done in the name of our faith, even if we do not receive any recognition for it.

This is the way we have to walk together as disciples of Jesus. This is a way of doing things willingly and freely, without being forced and without being under pressure, just for the glory of God and the welfare of our fellows. Here we come in the presence, not of a terrifying Judge, but of a wonderful mediator of a new covenant whose blood is more precious than the blood of Abel, Jesus. May we take to heart Jesus' example of humility and give to others with compassion, generosity and respect of their dignity as he did! May God bless you all!



Homily Date: August 29, 2010  
© 2010 – Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD  
Contact: [www.mbala.org](http://www.mbala.org)  
Document Name: 20100829homily.pdf

**Sirach 3, 17-18, 20, 28-29; Hebrews 12, 18-19, 22-24a; Luke 14, 1, 7-14**