

22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in OT\_C

August 31, 2025

St. Edward's Parish

Friends, last week we heard Our Lord say, “strive to enter through the narrow door” (i.e. the narrow door of salvation). In today's Gospel, Our Lord gives a practical principle for approaching that narrow door to eternal life, one which He repeats on several occasions: “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”.

Jesus has been invited to a meal at the house of an important Pharisee, and He observes people choosing places of honour, so He gives a brief teaching. The teaching may seem strange because it sounds as if Jesus is advising how to gain public honour at a banquet by taking a lowly seat and then being invited higher. However, His purpose is not to teach how to gain honour before people at a banquet, but how to approach eternal life. The parable of the banquet uses a familiar situation to illustrate that if we humble ourselves, God will raise us up to eternal life.

Humility is recommended often in the Scriptures. For example, Jesus teaches that we must become humble like children to be great in heaven (Mt 18:4). The word *humility* is one we use often, but what exactly does it mean in the biblical sense? Humility means knowing the truth of who we are; namely, *that without God we are merely dust and that anything good in us is His gift*. The word ‘humility’ has its root in the Latin word ‘humus’ which means ground or soil. Therefore, to be humble is to be grounded in the truth of who we are before God. Further, it means to recognize that we are merely ‘soil’ that has been given life by God. St. Theresa of Avila wrote to her sisters that “to be humble is to walk in truth” (Interior Castle VI.10).

Humility does not mean never attempting anything great; rather, it means acknowledging that without God we are nothing. Instead of being proud of his achievements, the humble person gives God the credit. Humble people are not disturbed if other people do not think well of them. They know they are just dust and anything good they have ultimately come from God. In fact, humble people are happy to be unappreciated because they know that it reflects the truth: without God we really are just dust.

True humility – the recognition of our nothingness – opens our hearts to God. We turn to Him for everything. We stop thinking about ourselves and stop trying to prove ourselves. Instead, we start living to do the will of God in all things. That may mean doing our professional work very well, it may mean accomplishing something great; however, we no longer do it for ourselves, but solely for God. If everything we have is taken away, we are not troubled because we only did it for God in the first place. The more we are empty of ourselves the more God can fill us and draw us up to Himself. That seems to go to the heart of what is said in the Gospel: “He who humbles himself will be exalted”.

There are many ways we can strive to grow in humility each day, some of these may include (see St. Escriva, “17 Signs of a Lack of Humility” for further reflection): not needing to be thanked or noticed for the good we do; being constantly aware that all the gifts we have are from God; keeping in mind that we do not deserve praise; patiently accepting it when others think badly of us or when we are overlooked; receiving correction from others without getting defensive or making excuses; not wanting to get our own way; apologizing when we are wrong; not giving our opinion unless it is asked for or truly needed; embracing menial tasks; keeping interior peace when we fail or suffer some humiliation; being quick to see the good in others and finding reasons to see others as better than ourselves.

Of course, the sacrament of Confession is one of the greatest ways to grow in humility. Here we come before God, admitting our faults, and taking that humbling step of admitting them before another person. Our Lady, Mary, is a model for humility. She understood herself as simply the lowly handmaid of the Lord (Lk 1:38, 48). She knew her nothingness without God; may she teach us the way to true humility.