

Homily Ideas for Sunday September 2, 2007

The Twenty-Second Sunday of Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

Day before Labor Day

From the reading from Sirach: ...“...conduct your affairs with humility,...Humble yourself the more, the greater you are...”

From the reading from Hebrews: ...“you have drawn near to...the city of the living God...”

From the gospel of Luke: ...For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled and he who humbles himself shall be exalted....

- ❖ On this Sunday before Labor Day, I think today’s readings give us some ideas about how to conduct ourselves as we go about our life’s work; how to live our faith Monday through Saturday in the midst of our workday lives.
- ❖ Please understand that by “work” I mean any and all the productive activities we may undertake. Certainly, working for the money to shelter, feed, and clothe ourselves and our loved ones is the typically accepted definition of work. However, I think that is too limiting. I think we also work when we do the dishes, clean house, cut the grass, watch the children, visit our sick or housebound family or friends, and even in bearing the pains and discomfort of our own illnesses.
- ❖ The question that comes to my mind is, “How can I be sick and be faithful?” “How do I parent a troubled child (one in the Terrible Two’s or one in wing-spreading adolescence) in a way faithful to my choice to be drawn near to the city of the living God?”
- ❖ I think the first reading and the Gospel reading from Luke suggest one key aspect of the way to do that: practice humility, live humbly.
- ❖ That sounds good, but what does it mean? How do I do that?
- ❖ I’m pretty sure it is not an exaggerated bowing and scraping to the authority figures in our lives be they parents, spouses, or supervisors.
- ❖ It seems to me that humility centers on our gifts and talents. We may discover and develop them; but if we acknowledge that they are gifts from God and not

creations of our own egos, that is when we recognize our place in creation, and then we are truly humble.

- ❖ I do believe that humility means to recognize our talents and our limitations and to exercise them in a spirit of deference. That is, to recognize that others may have talents and knowledge greater than ours in some areas, perhaps even in the areas we believe we are strongest. If we truly accept that possibility, we would still put forth our ideas and efforts but without pretension, without arrogance or excessive assertiveness.
- ❖ We would see ourselves not in competition but in cooperation or collaboration to bring the best from everyone to any given task or situation.
- ❖ As I look back over my life, I think I have found several ways to identify when I am not living humbly. One is by what I think about individuals as I people watch. If I find myself identifying traits or characteristics that I do not like or consider negative or funny (too fat, too skinny, too loud, too quiet, in a word, *too* anything), I've entered into competitive judging. I am not living with humility but seeking to place myself above others in some/any way.
- ❖ Another way is by how I go about working with others on common projects. If I find myself pushing to speak first and often putting forward my ideas and centering and re-centering any discussion toward the acceptance of my ideas, I probably am not acting with humility. I am certain I am right and others need only accept the brilliance of my ideas. I think Stephen Covey is speaking of a spirit of humility when he said, "Seek first to understand, and then to be understood" in his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.
- ❖ I do not practice humility in my workplace by denying or not using my talents. I do practice humility by recognizing that there are limits to my gifts and that the gifts of others and my gifts together may provide a better outcome than either of us alone could accomplish.
- ❖ To me the message of today's Gospel passage is that when we recognize we are not perfect beings and that others can help us do our work better than we can alone, we will be exalted both for doing our work better and for doing it in a better way.

(Submitted by Louis Trenta)