

22nd Sunday in the Ordinary Time (C)

God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the pure of heart.

Sirach 3:17-18,20,28-29; Psalm 68:4-5,6-7,10-11; Hebrews 12:18-19,22-24a; Luke 14:1,7-14

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings to you with the words of the responsorial psalm, "God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor."

The term "poor" here refers not only to material poverty but is also connected to the idea of being "pure of heart," which emphasizes a disposition focused on giving glory to God. Therefore, it could be read as, "God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the pure of heart." We are created to be "pure of heart." However, as we journey through life, our purity of heart can be influenced by many factors, both positive and negative. The challenge presented in our readings is to reflect on how we can rekindle that "pure of heart."

As we ponder the readings, let us first prayerfully answer the following questions:

- Would you choose a front seat at Bruno Mars' concert, or a front seat at Sunday Mass?
- Would you choose an economy seat on a plane, or business class?
- Would you choose a regular table at the luau, or the presidential table with the VIPs?
- Would you choose to have dinner with the poor and homeless or with the rich and famous people?

Our choices reveal not only our tastes and preferences but also the priorities and values that are in our hearts.

When our Lord Jesus notices the attitude of the hosts and guests, rushing for the best seats or wanting to upgrade their seats, He teaches His disciples the lesson of humility. He concludes the parable by saying: "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Lk. 14:11). The Lord wills for his disciples to embrace the virtue of humility, and it is what our Lord wants us to keep in our hearts.

I recall that when I was back home, a bishop visited a parish to celebrate its anniversary. Because it was too warm, he wore only a T-shirt when he entered the parish hall kitchen through the back door. He went inside to drink water.

A religious sister who managed the kitchen didn't recognize him and thought he was the driver, drove him out of the kitchen, and told him to go to the separate cottage designated for the drivers. Meanwhile, the bishop pleaded, "Sister, can I have just a glass of water?" But the sister insisted and pointed him out to go to the cottage.

During Mass, the sister became uneasy sitting in the pew when he saw the bishop, whom she had mistaken for a driver, was presiding. She didn't finish the Mass. She went out, so miserable and ashamed of what she had done.

The lesson here is that it is important to always treat people with care, for we never know who we may meet or how they may become someone one day.

What is the importance of humility that Jesus wants His disciples to practice? Humility enables them to thrive in all circumstances. When they learn to be humble, they will find joy and peace even in the most unfavorable situations. In turn, they will become sources of joy and embody peace themselves, as proud people are unable to radiate joy and peace.

There is a blessing in being humble. The Book of Sirach teaches us to "conduct your affairs with humility. Humble yourself, and you will find favor with God" (Sir. 3:17). When we embrace humility, God dwells within our lives and, in His mysterious ways, leads us to heights we may never have expected. Our Lord Jesus clearly states in the Gospel that the humble will be exalted, while the proud will be humbled. This means that God will take blessings away from the proud and give them to the humble. In the eyes of our Lord Jesus, self-exaltation is a futile effort. It values external appearances rather than interior qualities. He urges us to avoid pride because it is not the way of heaven and can ultimately lead to our downfall. It is worth noting that Lucifer fell from heaven due to pride. Pride makes humility difficult.

The story of our faith begins with humility and proceeds with humility. God humbles and lowers Himself: He comes among us, lowers Himself, and remains humble even to the Cross. He continues to humble himself through a small white appearance of the Holy Eucharist. Indeed, the Holy Eucharist is filled with the ritual of humility: the Confiteor (striking our breast three times), the offertory (may the Lord accept the sacrifice in his hands for our good...), the Our Father, which is the prayer of the humble, and before receiving Communion, (Lord, I am not worthy...)

Humility is not about belittling ourselves or making ourselves inferior. Instead, it is a joyful acknowledgment that our gifts, talents, and abilities are blessings from God. This understanding inspires us to use these gifts in gratitude to God, who loves us unconditionally. At the same time, true humility does not ignore our human limitations and weaknesses. It allows us to recognize that we are sinners, yet sinners who have been forgiven and will continually need forgiveness.

Humble people can acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses without becoming overly proud of one or discouraged by the other. Consequently, humility allows us to be genuine, while pride can lead to a false sense of self. It fosters a deep intimacy with the Lord. This is a personal invitation from Jesus to everyone. He said, "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest" (Matthew 11:29). He promises that those who embrace his meekness and humility will discover rest and be blessed by his presence, peace, and joy.

Without humility, true joy and peace will be absent. We cannot effectively proclaim Christ or serve as His witnesses without it. As His witnesses, we are challenged to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind when we host a banquet. Why? Because that is how God loves us—He invites us to His banquet even when we cannot repay Him. The poor remind us of what truly matters: joy is not found in luxury but in sharing. Helping those who cannot repay us is a true test of love; if we only assist those who can give back, it is not love, but merely a business transaction.

It's important to remember that not all saints are martyrs who shed their blood; not everyone has the opportunity to donate significantly to the poor; not all are virgins, teachers, or doctors, but all are humble.

Every Sunday, we gather to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, a heavenly banquet. Some of you may have chosen the first, second, third, or last seats, but the important thing is that we are all special guests of Jesus. Our Eucharistic celebration is a celebration among equals, where the virtue of humility taught by our Lord is nourished and rekindled in our hearts again and again.

Lord Jesus, make our hearts like yours. Amen.

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor