22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time(C)

We all know Christ is a **King**, and kings rule their kingdoms with **laws**.

One of the most important laws in Christ's Kingdom is the law of **humility**.

And this law says that "everyone who **exalts** himself will be **humbled**, and everyone who **humbles** himself will be **exalted**".

In other words my friends, **greatness** in his Kingdom comes **not** from

**outdoing** other people, **outperforming** them, and **outdistancing** them.

Because you see, greatness in **Christ's** eyes comes from **serving** other people, from **elevating** them, **helping** them advance, and keeping **oneself** in the **background**.

You know in his very first sermon, Jesus had taught the **same** law with **different** words: "Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

And it's the same law stated so directly in today's First Reading: "conduct your affairs with **humility**, and you will **be loved**... **Humble** yourself... and you will find **favor** with God."

This law goes **directly against** everything this fallen world **teaches** us. It's **extremely** hard for us to swallow, which is why Jesus explained it by using this unambiguous **parable**.

But even the parable wasn't **enough**. This law is so **fundamental**, that Jesus also taught it to us by **living it out** in an **extreme** way: through his **passion and death**.

Jesus, the Lord of Heaven, came to earth and purposefully took the **lowest place possible** - that of a **condemned criminal**.

He freely took on the **most humiliating** form of death - **crucifixion**.

He allowed himself to be **stripped** of every honor.

He allowed his **reputation** to be dragged through the **mud** by the lies and corruption of his enemies.

And yet my friends, because he **humbled himself** so **thoroughly**, he has been glorified so **magnificently**. Such is the law of his Kingdom.

You see the Law of Humility is written not only in the **Gospel**, but even in **nature**. Consider the tallest and most fruitful **trees**.

How can they **stand firm** in spite of **storms, wind,** and **earthquakes**?

What gives them the **vitality** to **bear fruit** year after year, spreading their own goodness to all living things around them?

Their **roots**. Because without those **deep, strong roots**, the tree would **crash** to the ground in the first summer storm.

You know without **wide, expansive roots**, they couldn't absorb the **nourishment and moisture** necessary for putting out leaves, buds, flowers, and fruit.

But these all-important roots are **completely hidden**. They really are in the **"lowest place"**, where no one pays any attention to them.

And without the **root** of **humility**, our **lives** cannot bear the **fruit** of authentic **happiness** for ourselves and those around us.

Consider also **the mountains and the valleys**.

The majestic **mountaintops** pierce the brilliant sky with their **jagged peaks**.

Impressive, visible from a distance, awe-inspiring - but also **barren**. Because the **higher up** you go on the mountain, the **less life** you find.

Now the valleys **beneath** the mountaintops are **hidden**.

You can't **see** them from far away. They **draw no attention to themselves**.

But in this lowest place they receive the **fresh water** that flows down the mountainside from the melting ice on top, water full of **nutrients** from the eroding soil.

So the **valleys overflow with life** -they have flowers, grass, trees, animals, streams, birds, and fish.

And when we **exalt ourselves,** we become **impressive to others** but **barren of life**, like **mountaintops**.

You see my friends, when we are more like low, hidden valleys, and we **humble** ourselves, as **Christ** did, our lives become **fruitful and vibrant**, both here on earth and for all eternity in heaven.

Thereby, by following the **Law of Humility,** we are led to interior peace, joy, wisdom, and a greater share in God's glory. And you know what? This is exactly what Christ wants for us.

And the more we **grow** in humility, the more we will **experience** those things.

So **how** can we grow in humility?

My friends, there are **two things** every single one of us can do in order to grow in humility.

Two things that we can do **today**, **tomorrow**, and **every day** this week.

The **first** is to **pray**. Every time we pray, we **acknowledge God's greatness** and our **dependence** on him.

Every time we pray, we exercise the virtue of humility, whether it's a **short** prayer or a **long** prayer, a **good** prayer or **distracted** prayer.

If we **want** to get humble, let's **pray more**, let's **recharge our commitment** to a decent life of prayer. Prayer is the **perfect workout** for strengthening humility.

**Second**, we can stop **talking so much about ourselves**.

You see, our **fallen nature** is always pushing **us** to be the **center** of our conversations. But our **Christian nature** is always reaching out to take an interest in our **friends** and **neighbors**.

So this week, let's give our Christian nature a hand. Choose **one relationship**, and in this week, make a **concerted effort** to be more interested in knowing what the **other** person is going through than in telling them what **you're** going through.

Today, Jesus will **humble himself** again by coming to us in the Holy Eucharist, reminding us that humility is the secret to a **fulfilling and fruitful** life.

Let's **thank** him for that, and when we have him in our hearts, let's ask him for this favor, which he is so **eager** to give us: Lord Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make **our** hearts more and more like **yours**.