

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 5, 2026

Brothers and sisters, today in the First Reading the prophet Zechariah, announces the joyful news that the Messianic King is coming. He is coming not as a proud warrior, but as a humble and gentle leader, riding on a donkey and Jesus fulfilled this prophecy when he rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Moreover, today we hear Christ say to his disciples, *“Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. You will find rest for your souls.”* Humility and gentleness are two beautiful virtues, but they don't seem to make much sense in today's competitive world.

In our culture, there is a belief that to get ahead in life, one must be forward, callus, overbearing, and asserting their will. “I got to do it my way.” Frank Sinatra has a theme song about that. You get to Heaven by doing it his way. You go the other place by going the other way. There's a warning. I am not saying Frank is in hell, just so we're clear. [laughter]

There's a belief that we have to be hard to get ahead. The perception is that if you are gentle or humble, people will walk all over you. Thus, gentleness and humility can be equated with timid, passive, and weak people. However, gentleness and humility are not forms of weakness, but rather they are virtues. They are gentleness; they are strength. They are not vices; they are virtues. Vices are our weakness. Vices make us slaves. Virtues set us free, and virtues come from the source. Virtues are excellent and they come from Christ himself for he was gentle and humble of heart.

But starting with gentleness, we see in Scripture that Jesus was gentle, especially towards the weak and the wounded. Those who

cannot care for themselves, he was protecting. Orphans, widows, those who couldn't speak up. Now let's make no mistake, brothers and sisters, this Christ was not weak. He was very strong, and when the occasion demanded it, our Lord could be very assertive as when he drove out the money changers in the temple, when he stood up to the Pharisees. I was actually thinking about this homily again this morning, and I was reminded of the country song, *Daddy's Hands*. Dad's hands were soft and gentle; there was always love in Daddy's hands.

Nothing is so strong as gentleness, and nothing is so gentle as real strength. It takes a strong, self-confident person to be gentle. And a gentle person knows that growth results from not from forcing, but from nurturing, from advising, from educating. If you love, you are gentle and there are certain tasks that only gentleness can accomplish. To illustrate this, I would like to share a few stories of conversion brought about two gentlemen. The first one is a conversion story involving the Mission of Charity nuns ministering in San Francisco. These are Mother Theresa of Calcutta's nuns. And they would go out two by two and they would talk and minister to the indigenous, to the lonely, the people living on the streets. One time they were about to ask this person who looked like a lady, "Would you like us to pray over you?" As they were ready to start, they felt a tap on their shoulders. "Sister, come here!" Another person had called them over. "Come here, sister. That's not really a lady. That's a man trying to be a lady." And you know what they did? They went back. "Do you want us to pray over you?" They asked as he had heard the whole conversation. And the person said "Yes." And they prayed over him. The sisters went out night after night, week after

week, and when they found him, they prayed over him along with the other people. Well, eventually, he came back into the church. He stopped identifying as a woman, he stopped working the the streets, he got help, got recovery, he had a full conversion through their prayers, and their kindness to a human being and the power of God. They met him where he was with a gentle, humble heart.

The next one also involves a priest, a monsignor in the Nativity Parish, by St. Patrick's, in Menlo Park. They had perpetual adoration and every once in a while, some of the people would seek out the parish as a place to sit in time with the Lord to pray. But this one is a conversion story involves a gay couple married by the state. They wanted to come back into the Church. They talked to the priest who said, "You're both welcome. This church is open to everybody. But we want to be clear, we don't want to cause scandal. You are welcome here, you are brothers in Christ, but you are not here to cause scandal." They said, "Well, we just want to pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament." And the priest noted, "You know, we have time at two and three a.m. because those hours are open right now. Please consider coming then. You can pray, and you won't feel outcast. Nobody will be there to interrupt you." And they did. The two men came, and after a while, guess what happened? They ended up renouncing their lifestyle, getting civilly divorced and coming into full communion with the Church. A person humble of heart brings great conversion to the downcast. A gentle person treads lightly, listens carefully, looks tenderly, and touches with reverence.

Now, looking at humility, the virtue of humility does not mean that we are to demean ourselves. We're not supposed to run around

saying, “Look how bad I am!” For example, if a world class ballerina upon receiving a compliment for her dancing skill, were to say, “I can hardly dance! Oh, please stop.” That's false humility which is a form of pride. It is like Christians who say, “God can't forgive me because I'm so bad a sinner.” Really? You, a created being, are more powerful than the uncreated creator, the infinite God? You are telling me your sins are so bad, and he can't forgive that? Sorry, that's pride. That's not humility; it is false humility. Rather, humility would be for the ballerina to recognize the gifts that she has been given and acknowledge that she cultivated those gifts with dedication, hard work, and persistence. She would say something like this: “I give thanks to God for giving me the graces to dance. The gift to dance, but also the graces and ability to train and grow in this world because of incorporating what he is doing in my life.”

True humility is recognizing who we are in relationship with God because he is the one who made us, who we are in relationship to God. Now, because of our Baptism we are children of God, the Father most High. In Christ Jesus we can talk to the creator of the universe, 92 billion light years in a distance of material and space and time. We can say “That means Father.” And he wants to have an infinite personal relationship with each and every one because as soon as we are in Christ, it is a gift. It's a blessing.

Let's pause for a moment. None of us know what the world is like without the Holy Spirit in it, right? We were all born into this world right now. The Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost, and filled their world, and filled them. God was so far off and so distant that people did not have a good, accurate understanding of him. He would talk to prophets, and before Christ was John the Baptist. In Christ we

have God as Father, that we can talk to you as Father, not 'Mr. Father,' not 'Lord Father.' But 'Dad! I'm your son, I'm your daughter.'

In our Baptism, we are adopted children of God and Father Most High who loves us beyond all measure. We're siblings and friends, of God, the Son, the only begotten Son, who redeemed us on the cross. And we really care of God the Holy Spirit, who guides and nurtures us. We have been given a tremendous gift, and we are blessed indeed and it is false humility to deny that. True humility is that God has given us a gift and we need to acknowledge that.

In those who are not baptized, we are made in the image and likeness of God. We hear this in generations. We are sought out by Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, who died on the cross that we may have internal life. We all have dignity. We all have worth, not because of what we do or have done, but because God who made us is working to save each and every one of us. This is where we touch people with gentleness, with reverence, not out of what they have done but who they are in relationship with God. And who we are in relationship with God as his sons and daughters.

Unfortunately, brothers and sisters, we come to identify ourselves by what we do. I'm a mother; I'm a teacher; I'm a doctor; I'm a lawyer; I'm a priest. Notice that I went in descending order.

[laughter] Others identify sometimes with their sins, in what we do. I am an adulterer; I am a liar; I am a thief, etc. Pick one of the Ten Commandments or a vice or any other sin - some see themselves only through that lens, and this is important, because how we see ourselves will dictate how we act. It forms our identity, which forms our actions. Do we see ourselves as sons and daughters of God the

Father most high who loves you without measure? Or do we see ourselves as fallen human natures in a sin? Or do we see our brothers and sisters in the same lens as we see ourselves through our errors? Importantly, we are not sons of our sins. We are his children, and we are loved beyond all measure because God loves us and paid the price for our transgressions. We are sons and daughters of God the Father most high, first and foremost.

Though we do sin, that is what we do, not who we are. Humility means recognizing our true greatness by acknowledging God who is all greatness. He has given that to us. We have accepted it; we have received it. We're thankful for it.

It is in our Lord who is gentle and humble that we find our true identity. Moreover, humility is the soil which allows all other virtues flourish. To the gentle and humble even Jesus promises peace of soul. We get a whole another homily down this. We see peace as the mere absence of conflict, but recently, he's asleep in the boat in the middle of the sea with an earthquake. That's peace. Another homily. If we were gentler in our dealings with one another, we would have more peace in our home and in the world.

And if we were more humble, we would have more peace within ourselves. Saint Seraphim of Sarov said: *"Acquire a peaceful spirit, and thousands around you will be saved."* If you acquire inner peace, and a multitude of people will find salvation near you.

Today, at this Mass we ask God to be gracious and grow in gentleness and humbleness of heart in order to continue to reflect Christ in our lives and find rest in Jesus now and for all eternity. Thank you.