

The Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time/Year A –  
4/5 November 2017 – Commissioning of Extraordinary  
Ministers at all Masses; 5:00 PM – Recognition of  
Veterans/Prayer for Deceased Members of Knights of  
Columbus; 11:00 AM – Remembering Our Lady of Victory  
members who died/buried from Our Lady of Victory since  
last All Souls' Day  
Our Lady of Victory Parish Community  
HOMILY

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:**

Malachi 1:14b-2:2b, 8-10

- “And now, O priests, this commandment is for you: If you do not listen, if you do not lay it to heart, to give glory to my name, says the Lord of hosts, I will send a curse upon you and of your blessing I will make a curse. You have turned aside from the way, and have caused many to falter by your instruction; . . . I, therefore, have made you contemptible and base before all the people, since you do not keep my ways, but show partiality in your decisions. Have we not all one father? Has not the one God created us? Why then do we break faith with one another, violating the covenant of our fathers?”

**Responsorial Psalm:**

Psalm 131 - *Sung*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:**

1 Thessalonians 2:7b-9, 13

- “With such affection for you, we were determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our very selves as well, so dearly beloved had you become to us. You recall, brothers and sisters, our toil and drudgery. Working night and day in order not to burden any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. And for this reason we too give thanks to God unceasingly, that in receiving the word of God from hearing us, you received not a human word but, as it truly is, the word of God, which is not at work in you who believe.”

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**GOSPEL:**

**MATTHEW 23:1-12**

- "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. . . . All their works are performed to be seen. . . . As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.' You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called 'Master'; you have but one master, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

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I. I know of few people, myself included, that understand correctly the meaning of “humble” . . . and certainly, as we hear Jesus lead up to using a version of this word in Matthew’s Gospel . . . an incorrect understanding of the word only complicates matters . . . and the way the dictionary defines the word . . . “low self-regard and sense of unworthiness” . . . does not help. How, then, is it even possible for someone who “humbles” himself or herself to be “exalted” . . .

Perhaps, understanding the root word for humble and humility can help . . . since “humility”, “the quality of being **humble**”, **ultimately has its roots in the word “humus”** which may be translated . . . as "grounded", or "from the earth", Dictionary definitions accentuate humility as a low self-regard and sense of unworthiness.

Recall the second account of creation in the Book of Genesis, chapter 2: “then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” . . . To be humbled . . . to humble ourselves . . . is to understand how we even got to be . . . it is to recognize that none of us had life until God fashioned us . . . formed us . . . breathed life into us . . . To be humbled . . . to humble

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ourselves is to understand and recognize that to live, even now, requires filling us with what we need and then, in turn, using what God has given us . . . not claiming it as our creation . . . our doing . . . but always as God's creation . . . God's doing . . . for it will only be then that we will be "lifted up" . . . only then, when we accept and own who we truly are . . . WHO'S we truly are . . . that we will be exalted . . . not by any human person, but by the God who has created us and given us life . . .

As Pastor Rick Warren writes in his popular book, "The Purpose Driven Life": "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less."

## **II. (5:00 PM Mass):**

What better example have we then to remember and recognize the many veterans of our country . . . of our own parish community . . . who, "thinking of themselves less" and with great care and devotion for the best of freedom and liberty that we enjoy and continue to enjoy . . . thinking of others "more" gave of their time . . . their energy . . . their spirit . . . and in many, many cases, even their very lives . . . not seeking to be exalted . . . not expecting

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reward . . . but rather . . . protecting and serving others for the common good.

Add to this gathering of faith-filled, faithful, men and women who said “yes” to serving . . . not for personal gain but certainly out of personal conviction those who form the fraternity of the Knights of Columbus . . . again, not seeking to be exalted, but rather, thinking of others “more” and of themselves “less”. We are especially grateful for the service of those Knights who, this past year . . . serving God and their Church faithfully, were commended to God, and who’s greatness was found in their very service.

### **III. (5:00 PM and 9:00 AM):**

An Ursuline Sister who is a very dear friend of mine always offers some witty sayings . . . insights into life . . . including what I have labeled the “great leveling principle” . . . She will say, “You know, we’re all going to end up on bed pans some day, no matter who we are or who we think we are.”

Each and every one of us wants to matter . . . each and every one of us wants to make a difference . . . perhaps, each and every one of us, at times, wishes that

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we might even be considered “great” . . . and we are . . . but our greatness, as Jesus reminds us, does not lie in our position or power or strength . . . rather, it lies in our recognition of who’s life we carry in us . . . who’s life we give and share through us . . . Jesus Christ! and his model and witness of serving.

Perhaps, I would add a phrase to what Pastor Rick Warren wrote . . . While “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less”, is true, graced humility includes “thinking of Christ more” as we bring him to others and encounter him because of others.

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#### **IV. (11:00 AM):**

Today, as we gather to remember the lives of so many that were loved and continue to be loved and missed deeply . . . we can't help but think of the impact these individuals had . . . not only on the lives of those who continue to mourn their loss . . . but the lives of so many others . . . of the many times they thought "less" of themselves and "more" of others . . . more, certainly of the God who gave them life . . . more, of their spouse . . . their children . . . their extended family . . . their neighbor as well as the stranger . . . their community and their Church . . .

Today, as we gather . . . we are grateful to God who breathed life into them . . . and into us . . . loved ones who never needed to prove themselves in greatness . . . but did show us so much more in humility . . . and the life God breathed into them has been shared and continues on . . . yes, through family . . . but through so many others as well . . .

Today, our mere presence here is a testimony to the truth that those who have died mattered . . . and still do . . . but it also is a reminder that each and every one of us

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matters . . . each and every one of us makes a difference . . . Our greatness does not lie in our power or position or strength, but, as Jesus reminds us, in our recognition, like those whose lives we celebrate this day, in our recognition of who's life we carry in us . . . who's life we give and share through us . . . Jesus Christ! and his model and witness of serving.

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