

“For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” Words from our Gospel today, from the 14th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke – sisters and brothers, may the Lord give to you his peace and his joy.

Only those who are humble can receive the gifts of God. This is because we are either too proud to accept them or we do not know how to receive them without having to return the favor. In order to receive gifts as gifts, we need to recognize that gifts are not something earned or deserved or given-in-exchange, nor do they have expectations attached with them, but rather for gifts to truly be gifts, they are given unconditionally, out of love, just-because. Only those who can humbly acknowledge that they are in need, are open enough to realize that God’s blessings are gifts freely given. This is the kind of humility recommended by Sirach. This is the kind of humility possessed by the disadvantaged pictured in the gospel who cannot repay their gracious host.

It is very difficult for most people to be humble receivers of gifts. Our readings are calling our attention to a fundamental characteristic of human nature, a characteristic very difficult to admit. That is, because of our limited capabilities and our finite natures, we are in need of more than we can actually give out in return. Despite the magnificent accomplishments we have achieved, we are really dependent on the goodness of others. While the exchange of gifts may be a common and, indeed, noble practice, in those areas of life that are most important we must be humble receivers. As it is, we didn’t choose to be born into this world in this time and in this place, but we received the gift of life from the generosity of our parents (a gift, I might add, that is unfortunately being rescinded to millions of kids through abortion). And while no one is perfect, we receive the gift of forgiveness, all because others are gracious and understanding towards us, and not because we deserve it. We receive the gift of authentic love from friends and family and community, not because we are business partners nor because one person is useful to the other to whatever financial, sexual, emotional, or spiritual end, but rather we are loved regardless of our talents and quirks. Love is given just because - a gift given unconditionally, received only in humility. Besides these, many people have helped us on our journey of life, working hard and sacrificing for us so that we could enjoy the life we have today. We have much to be thankful for, and if received in humility, we would never take these gifts for granted.

As we have received from the abundant generosity of God, so we are called to give to others in turn. Only those who have received with a humble spirit can likewise give with the generosity of God, for they know they do not deserve God’s goodness, so they do not require anything back from those to whom they give. Thus, humility not only helps us to receive good things, but also to do good things graciously for others. Life is lived within this paradox of receiving humbly and giving generously, and we are all of us transformed as the process unfolds.

Now, this weekend at Queen of Heaven is the financial appeal for the seminary of the Diocese. No doubt you've heard some pretty dire criticism of Christ the King Seminary, and I do not want to overlook the experience of disappointment with the seminary which was shared so publicly in the news as of late, because I tell you seminary life is indeed extraordinarily demanding and everything from your schoolwork to your social life, from your spiritual lifestyle to your attitudes, from your physical health and psychological tendencies are all put under a microscope and scrutinized by multiple authorities each with their own respective evaluation towards the high standards which we strive for. And so, it is challenging, and the reality is that not everyone will achieve satisfaction and make it through the seminary program. Rightly so, because the people of God deserve good priests, deacons and lay leaders in ministry. And while I remember frustrating moments at the seminary when I was upset with something that was said or done, by and large, my experience was rather positive. I have fond memories, have made good friendships, I grew much as a person, was able to grow in faith, and was formed for ministry. I am forever grateful to St. Mark seminary in Erie, PA and to Christ the King Seminary in our own diocese for the many gifts they have given to me. But judge for yourselves. We have been blessed to have many good seminarians and clergy recently come through our doors. Many parishioners have spoken to me commending Fr. Darrell Duffy, Fr. David Baker, Fr. Daniel Serbicki, Fr. David Richards all of whom recently graduated from the seminary to come serve here. The last three years, we've had seminarians Bob Owczarczak, and Emerson Stevens, and Michael Johnson all of whom did well serving here and who loved being here with us. Plans have changed, and I share with you that we will now be getting another seminarian for his pastoral year. His name is Joseph Franz and he will be joining us this coming week. And it's great to have Deacon Mike on board as he approaches his one-year anniversary. Fr. Greg himself teaches out at the seminary. Our Ladies Sodality goes on retreat there every year. The 8th graders will be going there on October 23rd for a Day of Recollection. Most of our Eucharistic Ministers were trained there. Anyone is welcome for a class or a personal retreat or even to walk the beautiful grounds or take a book out from its vast library. Really, it's a place where all of us as a Church can come together to grow in faith and understanding. This is especially true as it pertains to who we are and where we are at as a Church here in Western New York, which simply cannot be replicated anywhere else. The future of ministry here at Queen of Heaven and the welfare of Church of Jesus Christ is in many ways dependent upon the work of the seminary. I know we ask for your help in many things, but the seminary needs your help to thrive; consider supporting the appeal today.

Regardless of your feelings towards the Diocese or the Seminary or what have you, today's readings are leading us to a greater sense of humility, of knowing our proper place in the world as it has been given to us. In humility, we realize that we have been given so much in our lives by countless people and could never repay them and that we have much to be grateful for. May this inspire us to be generous in turn, that all of us may be exalted.

Readings: <http://usccb.org/bible/readings/090119.cfm>

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 126

Reading 1[SIR 3:17-18, 20, 28-29](#)

My child, conduct your affairs with humility,
and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts.
Humble yourself the more, the greater you are,
and you will find favor with God.
What is too sublime for you, seek not,
into things beyond your strength search not.
The mind of a sage appreciates proverbs,
and an attentive ear is the joy of the wise.
Water quenches a flaming fire,
and alms atone for sins.

Responsorial Psalm[PS 68:4-5, 6-7, 10-11](#)

R. (cf. 11b) **God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor.**

The just rejoice and exult before God;
they are glad and rejoice.
Sing to God, chant praise to his name;
whose name is the LORD.

R. **God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor.**

The father of orphans and the defender of widows
is God in his holy dwelling.
God gives a home to the forsaken;
he leads forth prisoners to prosperity.

R. **God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor.**

A bountiful rain you showered down, O God, upon your inheritance;
you restored the land when it languished;
your flock settled in it;
in your goodness, O God, you provided it for the needy.

R. **God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor.**

Reading 2[HEB 12:18-19, 22-24A](#)

Brothers and sisters:

You have not approached that which could be touched
and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness
and storm and a trumpet blast
and a voice speaking words such that those who heard
begged that no message be further addressed to them.
No, you have approached Mount Zion
and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,
and countless angels in festal gathering,
and the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven,
and God the judge of all,
and the spirits of the just made perfect,
and Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant,
and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.

Alleluia[MT 11:29AB](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Take my yoke upon you, says the Lord,
and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel [LK 14:1, 7-14](#)

On a sabbath Jesus went to dine
at the home of one of the leading Pharisees,
and the people there were observing him carefully.

He told a parable to those who had been invited,
noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table.

"When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet,
do not recline at table in the place of honor.

A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him,
and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say,
'Give your place to this man,'
and then you would proceed with embarrassment
to take the lowest place.

Rather, when you are invited,
go and take the lowest place
so that when the host comes to you he may say,
'My friend, move up to a higher position.'

Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table.

For every one who exalts himself will be humbled,
but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Then he said to the host who invited him,
"When you hold a lunch or a dinner,
do not invite your friends or your brothers
or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors,
in case they may invite you back and you have repayment.

Rather, when you hold a banquet,
invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind;
blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you.
For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."