

22nd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – C; Aug. 31st 2025
Sirach 3: 17-18, 20, 28-29; Hebrews 12: 18-19, 22-24; Luke 14: 1, 7-14

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Mother Theresa was the embodiment of humility and simplicity. In early 50s she started her service in the slums of Calcutta in a very humble way. But in late 70s she became the most popular woman in the world. But she remained very humble and down the earth person. She won the Nobel Prize for humanitarian work in 1979. But she remained humble as the Mother Theresa of 50s till she died in 1997. An interesting incident happened in 1986 when Pope John Paul II visited Calcutta. He made a road show in the Pope Mobile along the busy streets of the city. Thousands of people gathered in the sidewalk to have a glimpse of the Pope and Mother Theresa too stood on the road side with her sisters to see the Pope. But the Pope noticed her as he was moving and he stepped out and took her too with him. But after couple minutes, Mother Theresa requested the Pope to let her step out. Later Mother Theresa commented on this incident saying, *“In a moment of excitement I acted foolishly and got into the Pope Mobile. But who am I to stand with the Holy Father in the Pope Mobile?”* It shows how humble she was.

Today’s first reading and gospel deal with the virtue of humility. The Book of Sirach is part of the Wisdom Literature and the author is Ben Sirach who lived 175 years before Christ. This Book contains useful and practical instructions for all generations. *(It is my request to all of you, please take the Book of Sirach and read it, if you have not yet read it).* Sirach instructs, **“My child conduct your affairs with humility and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts.”** That means a humble person is well appreciated than a giver of gifts. All the great men and women in the history always remained humble and served the marginalized.

In the gospel the Evangelist Luke describes a Sabbath dinner where all sorts of people were invited. As the scribes and Pharisees considered themselves as elite class, they always sought place of attention in every situation. So their struggle for the place of honor at the dinner prompted Jesus to teach the people the lesson of humility. Jesus says, **“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”** The greatness of a person lies in the acknowledgment or recognition given by people, not by his own self. Among the invitees no one could claim a place of honor more than Jesus. Yet he was the humblest among the guests. The very mystery of Incarnation itself is the symbol of the humility of God. **In Philippians chapter 2: 6-7, “Though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human**

likeness; and found human appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death even death on a cross.” According to Jesus it is the attitude of humility that makes someone great before men and God.

In the modern world humility is wrongly interpreted. *Humility does not mean thinking less of yourself than of other people, nor does it mean having a low opinion of your own gifts. It means freedom from thinking about yourself at all.* ~William Temple. Mother Theresa speaks about humility, **“If I try to make myself as small as I can, I’ll never become humble. It is humility with a hook. Humility comes when I stand as tall as I can, and look at all of my strengths, and the reality about me, but put myself on the side of Jesus Christ. And it is there I humble myself before Him.”**

Currently the virtues of humility, forgiveness and patience are considered to be the sign of weakness. Sometimes people remain humble because they could not sell their pride; they forgive because they are too weak to retaliate; they remain patient for they could not voice their opinion. As I mentioned it before, humility is neither underestimating nor overestimating our worth. Rather we acknowledge our talents and abilities as the gifts of God. Once we boast over our gifts as the achievement of our efforts, we become proud. A humble person will never compare himself/herself with somebody else and feel proud that I am better than **this one and that one**. The moment I feel I am Ok you are not Ok; I am going to be proud and the next thing what I will do is to look down upon you. St. Paul, who had every right to be proud says, **“If I boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness (2 Cor. 11: 30).”** With all humility Paul says in 1 Cor. 15: 10, **“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective. Indeed I have toiled harder than all of them; not I, however, but the grace of God in me.”** We don’t have anything to boast as what we own belongs to God. Please listen again to the words of Mother Theresa on humility, **“Humility is the mother of all virtues; purity, charity and obedience. It is in being humble that our love becomes real, devoted and ardent. If you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are. If you are blamed you will not be discouraged. If they call you a saint you will not put yourself on a pedestal**