

*Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time—Year C*  
*“Are You Humble Enough?”*

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## **Through the Words of the Gospel, May Our Sins be Wiped Away**

### **Holy Spirit, Help Me to Preach with Great Clarity and Great Charity**

Pier Giorgio was a truly humble young man. Unknown to his own family and even his closest friends, Pier held a boundless love for the poor residents of Turin, Italy. Pier shared in their sufferings while seeking to alleviate them, and in the attics and slums of Turin he secretly performed many acts of charity for his materially-deprived neighbors. In 1925, when he was only twenty-four years old, Pier contracted polio while helping the poor, he became ill and he suddenly died. On the day of his funeral, the eyes of his wealthy parents, who had an unhappy marriage and little faith, were opened to what was for them a shocking reality: thousands of persons—most coming from the poorest of Turin's neighborhoods—arrived to express their sorrow and pay their last respects to the friend of the poor and their own, touching his coffin as though it belonged to a saint. When his parents learned of their son's hidden Catholic life, they reconciled with one another, and Pier's agnostic father repented and returned to the practice of the Catholic faith. They also learned of the wellspring for their son's charitable heart, when it became known that Pier had been a young man who had humbly given his whole life to His Lord Jesus Christ.

Our *Catechism* teaches that, “...*the baptized person should train himself to live in humility,*” and this is the virtue which Pier exemplified so well and to which our Lord is exhorting us in today’s Gospel. To be humble is simply to recognize and to profess our total need for God, to see the truth about who we are as God’s creatures and, specifically, to embrace the need for the grace of God in our lives. The wedding banquet used by Jesus is an image of the Kingdom of God, and when our Lord proclaims, “...*the one who humbles himself will be exalted,*” He is explaining that if we want to be exalted in the Kingdom of God, we need to act humbly now. We need to cultivate the virtue of humility now, seeking the lowest place in this earthly life so that when the banquet of the Kingdom comes, we will be exalted. As St. Peter the Apostle tells us in his 1<sup>st</sup> Letter, “*Bow humbly under God’s mighty hand, so that in due time He may lift you high.*”

When you seek to be humble, as Ben Sirach tells in today’s first reading, “...*you will find favor with God.*” God gives His grace to those who seek humility. As you strive to become humble, you eventually come to a position of total trust in God when He speaks to you and, when He does speak, you will listen and obey with joy. Only then can the good fruit of God’s mercy be poured into your life and, through you, into the lives of others. And only then will you “...*enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table,*” described in today’s reading from the Letter to the

Hebrews as the angels (those who were humble enough to have rejected Satan), the assembly of the firstborn, the spirits of the just, and of course Jesus Christ Himself.

And so the question that begs to be asked is, “How do we become humble?” Jesus Himself provides the answer during our Gospel Acclamation when He admonishes us to “...*learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.*” What is it then, in its simplest form, that Jesus wants us to learn from Him and to understand? As the old *Baltimore Catechism* puts it so beautifully, God made us to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him for ever in Heaven.

The first key to humility is to know God. Do you know God? At the end of our lives, God will give each of us what we love most in this life. For you, will that be Jesus? To be in an agape love relationship with Jesus is by far what is most important during our earthly existence. Everything else—every other relationship, every interest, every pursuit—must be secondary. But, and this is a trap many Christians fall into as we can discern from the lives they lead, you can know a lot about Jesus without KNOWING Jesus. You can go to Mass every Sunday, read the Bible every day, study the *Catechism*, and spend 12 years or more in a Catholic school and know everything there is to know ABOUT Jesus Christ...but not KNOW Jesus Christ.

Do you KNOW Jesus Christ? To know Our Lord is to have everlasting life. What we do in the little time we have in this life will determine our eternity. We are all going to die—soon. Hear the words of St. Augustine and ponder them deeply, *“God has promised forgiveness to your repentance, but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination.”* God doesn’t promise any of us tomorrow and, in the end, Jesus is all that matters. And so we must spend time in prayer every day. You must come to know that God is your Father and He loves you and you are His beloved son or daughter. You will never come to know these things without spending quiet time—every day—in His loving arms. Holiness and coming to know God is in prayer, listening to Him, coming to know that you are loved. Are you humble enough to know God?

Do you love God? When you come to know that Jesus loves you, you must respond by loving others. On the night of His Last Supper, Jesus instructed each of us, *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”* Are you a loving person? Those who love live with JOY—putting Jesus first, others second, and always putting themselves third. Does this describe you? Better yet, is this the way those closest to you describe you? Because when you’re laying on your death bed, the only thing that will matter are your relationships—those who we loved and those who loved us back. God being first, and then those you gave your life away for. Are you humble enough to love God?

Do you serve God? The heart of the Lord's Prayer is the third petition, in which we ask God for the grace that "*Thy will* be done on earth as it is in heaven." Every day, in everything we do, our attitude must be "Whatever You want Father, I'll do." Like St. Paul, we need to adopt the attitude of being slaves of Jesus Christ. Do you adopt this attitude? Do you put Jesus totally in charge? Are you humble enough to recognize that Jesus cannot be your savior unless He's first your Lord. As Catholics, we understand that we own nothing, that everything we have has been given to us by God and that we are stewards, not owners, of these gifts. And we understand that Jesus must be in charge of how we use these gifts.

First, Jesus must be in charge of *your time*. One of the things that God desires most is to be in an intimate relationship with each one of us. Every day, Jesus Christ invites us to intimacy with Him. Why does He do so? God certainly doesn't need this relationship because He's already involved in a perfect communion of Love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. No, God invites us into relationship with Himself because He knows that therein lies the secret of our true happiness on earth—it is not what we possess but Whom we possess that makes all the difference. The order, place, and purpose for which each of us was created is to live in the Divine Will of our God, and anything else puts us on a collision course with sadness. But we can only discern God's Will by being in an intimate relationship of daily prayer. If you're not praying—every day—your spiritual heart is dying and thus, so too, is

your intimacy with God. Do you have a committed daily prayer time? To be a true disciple of Jesus Christ is not to fit Him into your life but to build your day around Him. Can you prove you love God the most by the time you give Him? Are you humble enough to put God in charge of your time?

Second, Jesus must be in charge of *your family*. The number one priority for any husband, wife or parent is to get their loved ones to Heaven. One of the primary Christian goals is to fill Heaven, to make Heaven crowded, with those we are closest to in this life. You have to be the instrument of Christ to your family. And this means you have to pray *for* your loved ones every day, you have to pray *with* them every day, and you have to be an example to them of what it is to be a Christian. You have to know and adhere to all of the teachings of the Church, including the difficult teachings. And that includes protecting your loved ones from the unholy filth and the lies of what our culture would have them believe is acceptable and normal. Are you humble enough to put God in charge of your family?

Third, and here's the one that the Holy Spirit addresses directly in today's readings, Jesus must be in charge of *your money*. Ask yourself, right now, how much of your money belongs to God. **PAUSE** Are you ready for the answer? **ALL OF IT!!!** It all belongs to God. We are simply stewards of the money God gives us—but at the end of the day it is His money. But our God is so generous that He simply asks you to give 10 percent—off the top before taxes—and He lets you keep

the rest. And you give to God by taking care of the poor. This is what Jesus wants us to understand in the second parable He gives in today's Gospel. If we hold a lunch or a dinner, what's wrong with inviting our family, our friends and our rich neighbors? It depends on our motive for doing so. Jesus is telling us that we don't want to engage in actions in this life when we know we are going to be repaid. Because if we're repaid now, we won't be repaid later by God. And this is why Jesus shifts to charity, to almsgiving, admonishing us to take care of "*...the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind....*" If we feed those who can't repay us, and do it for that very reason, Jesus promises that we will have built up treasure in Heaven and be repaid at the Resurrection. In fact, the Holy Spirit instructs us through Ben Sirach in our first reading that "*...alms atone for sins,*" and when you serve the poor, it's just like quenching a flaming fire with water, the fire representing our sins and the water our almsgiving.

In today's Psalm we hear that "*God gives a home to the forsaken.*" He does that through us when we live the hospitality that God desires of us. To "*...go and take the lowest place*" is to recognize that all your money, all that you have, is a gift, and give it away. This is the sacrificial life Christian disciples are called to. Give until it hurts. 10 percent—absolutely—but more if you are so blessed. The greater we are, the more we need to humble ourselves. Because when God asks on your judgment day, "How come tens of thousands of children died of hunger every day

in your lifetime?”, how will you answer? St. Mother Teresa did answer this question for us, when she explained, “*At the end of our lives, we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made or how many great things we have done. We will be judged by ‘I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless and you took me in.’*” If you’re not giving 10 percent to charity, you’re stealing from God. Are you humble enough to put God in charge of your money.

Finally, Jesus must be in charge of *your sexual life*. The very first commandment God ever gave to mankind is found all the way back in the very first chapter of Genesis, “*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth....*” The human body is holy because it was fashioned by the hand of God. Its being-male and being-female is holy. The sexual powers are sacred because they are aimed toward bringing into being new human persons, beings endowed with souls that can find their fulfillment only in God. It is a tremendous power, to hold within your body the capacity to cooperate with God in bringing new life into existence, the power of fatherhood, the power of motherhood. But how do most people treat this power? With contempt toward God they treat their bodies as nothing more than tools for pleasure. For 2,000 years the Holy Spirit has been absolutely consistent in teaching that sexual expression is only acceptable within the context of sacramental marriage between one man and one woman and open to new life. To engage in any other

sexual activity outside of marriage, to use contraception, to view pornography, to engage in homosexual acts—is to separate yourself from God. As with all other aspects of our lives, and regardless of how old-fashioned or outdated the Church’s teaching on sexual morality is treated by the culture we live in, we must invite Jesus into our bedroom lives and honor His desires for our sexuality. Are you humble enough to put God in charge of your sexual life.

*“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”* To be humble is to put God in charge of everything. It is to follow the example of the humblest creature ever made, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and let **your** soul magnify the Lord. St. Paul reached the point in his life where he was able to proclaim, *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me....”* To be humble is to die to ourselves and let Jesus live through us. That is the key to humility and the way to salvation—we must be crucified to be resurrected. Never forget that it is in this life, and not in another, that you, just as Pier Giorgio did so well, must testify that you belong to Jesus Christ. In His humility, Jesus is about to give Himself to each of us—Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity—in Holy Eucharist. So when you approach to receive Him, ask yourself, “Am I humble enough to commit my life entirely to Jesus Christ?”

One of Pier Giorgio’s favorite pastimes was mountain climbing, and he often said that it was in the grandeur of the Italian mountains that he would have some of

his best conversations with God. If you spend the time to read about his life, and I encourage you to do so as you strive for the virtue of humility yourself, you will discover a picture taken of Pier scaling the side of a steep cliff. At the bottom of this picture is written the words “verso l’alto,” Italian for “to the heights.” Shortly before he died, Pier left us with these words, *“Our life, in order to be Christian, has to be a continual renunciation, a continual sacrifice. But this is not difficult, if one thinks what these few years passed in suffering are, compared with eternal happiness where joy will have no measure or end, and where we shall have unimaginable peace.”* Pier spent his short but vibrant time on earth in humility, striving to know God, to love God, and to serve God with every part of his life. Because he was humble enough to give everything back to God, Jesus truly did exalt him when on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1990, Pier was beatified by Pope John Paul II. He reached those heights, he reached the summit of eternal life. Through the intercession of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, may we do the same.