

Gratitude Foundation



*“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”*

(Lk. 17:15-17)

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time—C

Fr. Glenn Joseph Theoret
Executive Director

www.gratitudefoundation.us
frglenn@gratitudefoundation.us

3713 County 416 20th Road
Gladstone, MI 49837

“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time—C

Reading 1

Sirach 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

Psalm 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

Hebrews 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

Matthew 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

Luke 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."

Exegesis

Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29

Sirach was promulgated approximately 180 years before Christ. It was written in Hebrew by a man named Ben Sira who was a Jewish person living in Jerusalem. *Sirach* gets its name from the transliteration of the name *Sira* into the Greek *Sirach*. The book was translated into Greek by Ben Sira's grandson several years later.

Ben Sira was a well-educated Jew who dedicated his life to a study of the Law and the Prophets. He was a highly respected scribe and teacher, who ran an academy for young Jewish men.¹ He was concerned with the growing Hellenistic influence on the people and in particular its negative influence on orthodox Jewish Religion. He viewed the influence as a dilution of authentic fidelity to Yahweh.

Sirach is a beautiful collection of wisdom and poetry. The original title in Hebrew was *The Wisdom of Yeshua* (Jesus) ben (son of) *Eleazar ben Sira*.² *Sirach* begins "Praise of Wisdom. All wisdom comes from the Lord and with him it remains forever... Before all things else wisdom was created, and prudent understanding from eternity. To whom has wisdom's root been revealed? Who knows her subtleties? There is but one, wise and truly awe-inspiring, seated upon his throne: It is the Lord; he created her... He has poured her forth upon all his works." (Sir 1: 1-8). In contrast with Greek philosophy which viewed wisdom as a human attribute flowing from within, *Sirach* reveals wisdom as a gift from God. God is the creator and the source of wisdom, and He chooses to pour out His wisdom upon creation. "With wisdom and knowledge, He fills them; good and evil He shows them." (Sir 17: 6).

Sirach proclaims: "The beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord." (Sir 1: 12). God pours His Wisdom upon those who stand in awe of Him, as creature stands before Creator.

The posture of *fear of the Lord*, a state of being in which one inherits wisdom, runs throughout the teachings of *Sirach*. It sets the stage for our pericope today. "For the sake of profit many sin, and the struggle for wealth blinds the eyes. Like a peg driven between fitted stones, between buying and selling sin is wedged in. Unless you earnestly hold fast to **fear of the Lord**, suddenly your house will be thrown down." (Sir 27: 1-3).

The proper human response to a posture of fear and awe before the Lord is humility. *Sirach* has a lot to say about the virtue of humility. In addition to our pericope here are a few examples. "Exalt not yourself lest you fall and bring upon you dishonor; for then the Lord will reveal your secrets and publicly cast you down." (Sir 1: 27). "Do not esteem yourself better than your fellows; remember, His wrath will not delay. More and more humble your pride; what awaits man is worms." (Sir 7: 16-17). "Better the worker who has plenty of everything than the boaster who is without bread. My son, with humility have self-esteem; prize yourself as you deserve. Who will acquit him who condemns himself? Who will honor him who discredits himself?" (Sir 10: 26-28).

Sirach contrasts humility with pride. "For the affliction of the proud man there is no cure; he is the offshoot of an evil plant." (Sir 3: 27). The polar opposite of the virtue of humility is the vice of pride. It is pride that is the core vice that caused the fall of humanity. At its deepest level, pride says "I don't need God." Humility is coming to the realization that we need God who is the font of our very existence. It was the devil who was in the Garden of Eden. He is the evil plant of which man's fallen human nature becomes an offshoot. Pride, therefore, comes natural to us. The virtue of humility must be aided by grace in order to overcome the sin of pride. To put on the heart and the mind of Christ is to embrace true humility. The Cross of Jesus is the ultimate act of humility in human history. Christ must be our model and guide.

1. Brown, Fitzmyer, Murphy; The New Jerome Biblical Commentary; P.H.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; page 498.

2. Ibid.

Exegesis (Continued)

Psalm 68:4-5, 6-7, 10-11

Psalm 68 consists of 36 verses. The NAB titles Psalm 68 *The Exodus and Conquest, Pledge of Future Help*. There is no consensus among scholars as to the dating of the psalm. Some argue that the psalm consists of three separate sacred songs that were assembled. ‘Every conceivable occasion and date have been suggested for this psalm, from the age of Joshua to that of the Maccabees’ (Kirkpatrick). To us it seems to be a compilation of three sacred songs. The first may date from the time of the Exodus: Num 10:12–35 should be read in conjunction with **2–11; 16–28**. Here we have the old marching-song, the manifestation at Sinai, and the gift of the manna (**2–11**).³

Our selected verses reflect back on the Exodus experience and the events of the wandering years in the desert as chronicled in Numbers chapter ten. Numbers chapter ten is titled in the NAB *From Sinai to the Plains of Moab*. “The Israelites moved on from the desert of Sinai by stages, until the cloud came to rest in the desert of Paran.” (Num 10: 12). Psalm 68 verse two (not included in our pericope) refers back to Numbers 10: 35: “Whenever the Ark set out, Moses would say, ‘Arise, O Lord, that Your enemies may be scattered, and those who hate You may flee before You.’” (Num 10: 35).

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. The Hebrew word for *God* in this verse and throughout Psalm 68 is *Elohim*. The Hebrew word translated as *LORD* is *Yahweh*. As Moses and the people travel with the Ark, Yahweh is traveling with them on the journey. The saving and guiding hand of God is evident in their lived experiences. They have witnessed their enemies scattered and for that they are moved to rejoice before God.

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. The Hebrew word for *father* in this verse is *ab* or *abba*, the endearing and affectionate name for a father or grandfather. The image of Yahweh as a loving father is prevalent in Scripture. He is a compassionate father who cares for the marginalized, for those most vulnerable, orphans and widows. “Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and be no longer stiff-necked. For the Lord, your God, is the God of gods, the Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who has no favorites, accepts no bribes, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and befriends the alien, for you were once aliens yourself in the land of Egypt.” (Deut 10: 16-18).

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. The *Book of Judges* refers back to the time of the journey of the Israelites from Edom in a similar fashion. “I to the Lord will sing my song, my hymn to the Lord, the God of Israel. O Lord, when You went out from Seir, when You marched from the land of Edom, the earth quaked and the heavens were shaken, while the clouds sent down showers.” (Jud 5: 3-4). In addition to singing the praises of Yahweh for deliverance from their enemies, the people are also called to rejoice for His saving and sustaining hand on the journey.

3. T. E. Bird, [“The Psalms,”](#) in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, ed. Bernard Orchard and Edmund F. Sutcliffe (Toronto; New York; Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1953), 460.

Exegesis (Continued)

Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24a

Our pericope is titled in the ESV *A Kingdom that Cannot be Shaken*. This passage is obviously reflecting back on the gift of the covenant at Mount Sinai, and the great theophany. “On the morning of the third day there were pearls of thunder and lightning, and a heavy cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all of the people in the camp trembled.” (Ex 19: 16).

There was great fear and awe experienced in the theophany of Mount Sinai. “Take care not to go up the mountain, or even to touch its base. If anyone touches the mountain he must be put to death. No hand shall touch him; he must be stoned to death or killed with arrows.” (Ex 19: 12-13).

In this beautiful passage *Hebrews* puts before us and contrasts the old and the new, Mount Sinai and Mount Zion, the old covenant and the new covenant, Moses and Jesus, the Israelites and the Church, the earthly mountain and the heavenly mountain, a theophany of fear and a theophany of peace and love, and the blood of Abel and the blood of Jesus and the martyrs.

Hebrews proclaims Jesus as superior to Moses (see Chapter 3). “Moses was ‘faithful in all His house’ as a servant to testify to what would be spoken, but Christ was faithful as a son placed over His house.” (Heb 3: 5-6). Whereas Moses was the mediator of the covenant at Mount Sinai, Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant. “For this reason He is mediator of a new covenant: since a death has taken place for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant, those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.” (Heb 9: 15).

No, you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. The Greek word translated as *living* in this verse is *zao*. There are two Greek words for *life*. *Bios* describes biological life as we know it. *Zao* is used to describe life that has God as its source, life that comes from the living God, from the life-breath of God. Mount Zion, Jerusalem, is an earthly image of the heavenly Jerusalem, or perhaps a doorway into the heavenly Jerusalem, because of the events that occurred in the earthly city, i.e., the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus.

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. Jude also reveals countless *angels*. “Behold, the Lord has come with His countless holy ones.” (Jude 1: 14). The *firstborn* refers to the Israelites. “So, you (Moses) shall say to Pharaoh: Thus says the Lord: Israel is My first-born.” (Ex 4: 22). The Greek word translated in this verse as *perfect* is *teleioo*. The connotation of the word suggests that something is accomplished, finished, or fulfilled the purpose for which it was created. It is the word that Jesus uses when He is calling us to be as My Heavenly Father is perfect. We are perfected by love, for love, our beginning and our end.

Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel. “Then the Lord asked Cain, ‘Where is your brother Abel?’” He answered, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’ The Lord then said: ‘What have you done! Listen: Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the soil!’” (Gen 3: 9-10). “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with human hands, that is, not of this creation) He entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but His own blood, thus securing eternal redemption.” (Hb 9: 11-12). “Therefore, brothers, since through the blood of Jesus we have confidence of entrance into the sanctuary by the new and living way He opened for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a ‘great priest over the house of God,’ let us approach with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water.” (Hb 10: 19-22).

Exegesis (Continued)

Luke 14:1, 7-14

The setting of our Gospel pericope is the same as it has been for the past several weeks. Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem to take up His Cross and die for our sins. On the way He is teaching and healing, the work of the Savior. He was being watched by the Pharisees. They are seeking to bring some charge against Him. In the omitted verses 2-6 Jesus heals a man with dropsy. It is the Sabbath. He has been trapped. The Pharisees have the offense they were looking for.

Jesus turns the tables on them as He watches them taking their places of honor at the banquet, and He tells the parable of the invited guests and then the parable of the great feast.

Luke continues to emphasize the teachings of Jesus relative to accepting or rejecting the invitation or the summons of God. The invitation is broad as God is drawing all people to Himself from the four corners of the world. The invitation must be accepted; the gift must be opened.

After a brief introduction our Gospel pericope consists entirely of the words of Jesus. His teaching focuses on the virtue of humility.

Scripture has a lot to say about the virtue of humility. Here are just a few examples. “When He is dealing with the arrogant, He is stern, but to the humble He shows kindness.” (Prov 3: 34). “Claim no honor in the king’s presence, nor occupy the place of great men; for it is better that you be told, ‘Come up closer!’ than that you be humbled before the prince.” (Sir 25: 6-7). “But He bestows a greater grace; therefore, it says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ So submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” (Jas 4: 6-7). “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.” (Jas 4: 10). “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for: ‘God opposes the proud but bestows favor on the humble.’ So humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exult you in due time.” (1 Pt 5: 5-6).

He told a parable to those who had been invited. The Greek word translated as *invited* in this verse and throughout the pericope is *kaleo*. *Kaleo* is a word that is used by Luke 43 times in his Gospel. It means to *summon* or to *call by name*. It connotes a very personal invitation. In Luke’s Gospel it is the word that Jesus uses when speaking of the call to discipleship or the call by God. It is a call that solicits a response, positive or negative.

‘My friend, move up to a higher position.’ Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. The Greek word that is translated as *esteem* in this verse is *doxa*. *Doxa* is rendered in many translations as *honor*. In reference to God *doxa* is often translated as *glory*. In both the Jewish and the Greco-Roman cultures of the time, honor was one of the most endeared attributes or societal mores to aspire to. Honor was all that many people had. To have honor for oneself and one’s family was considered a great blessing. No one wanted to experience shame.

In the parable of the *Great Banquet* Jesus gives us instruction on living out the virtue of humility.

Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; This instruction by Jesus would have been known by the devout Jew to be already a part of their Law. “Ezra stood up to read the Law... ‘Go eat rich foods and drink sweet drinks and allot portions to those who had nothing prepared; for today is holy to the Lord.’” (Neh 8: 10).

Exegesis (Continued)

Luke 14:1, 7-14

Blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." The Greek word translated in this verse as *blessed* is *makarios*. This is the fourteenth time that *makarios* appears in Luke's Gospel. *Makarios*, at its origin, speaks of a state of being that has God as its source. Aristotle taught that we could experience this higher state of being by dying to ourselves in self-giving love. As we die to ourselves, we connect with the ground of our being, which is divine life, love itself. As we connect with this immutable force, we reach an anchor point that is unshakable and eternal. It is transformative grace that elevates our lives to a new state of being. It is the fullness of life that Jesus talks about. It is a selfless (humble) state of being that is described by Jesus in the Beatitudes. *Makarios* appears throughout the Greek NT to describe a state of being that is divine in its origin. It is summed up best in the *Book of Revelation*: "I heard a voice from Heaven say, 'Write this; Blessed (*Makarios*) are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' said the Spirit, 'let them find rest from their labors, for their works accompany them.'"

Reflection

The Word of God this weekend calls us to contemplate the virtue of humility. Over the centuries most of the great spiritual guides of our tradition have viewed humility as the foundation of the spiritual life. Jesus is the source of this truth. The truth is that all that we are and all that we have are gifts from God. God is the giver and sustainer of all that was, that is and ever will be.

Our world is full of pride and false humility. To understand the fullness of this virtue of humility it is good to look first at the origin of the word itself. The original Hebrew word is the same word that is used in the creation story in the Book of Genesis. In the passage that describes God taking the "clay" or "dust" of the earth and breathing into it His life breath and man becoming a living being, the word for "clay" or "dust" is the origin of the word "humility." It also is the origin of similar English words like "human" or "humus." Recall the words of Ash Wednesday, "Remember man that you are dust and to dust you shall return." Knowing that without God we are dust is true humility. Knowing the reality of our total dependence on God is real humility.

It is often helpful to understand the opposite of a word to gain a deeper understanding of the truth that it portrays. The opposite of humility is pride. Whereas, humility is the foundation of the spiritual life, pride is viewed as the root of all evil and sin. At its deepest level pride says, "I do not need God." When we think that we are in charge, that we are in control of our lives, that we are self-sufficient and self-sustaining we fall into the pit of pride. We start to believe the falsehood that we don't need God. The devil is at work nurturing this lie in our modern culture.

We often equate humility with a lack of self-esteem or even placing ourselves in a position of looking humble for the sake of making ourselves look more important than we are. In our Gospel this weekend Jesus encourages us to rise above the social games that we play and to simply entrust our lives to our loving Father. God, after all, created us for Himself and created us in His own image and likeness. We need to add nothing to the original gift other than to accept His love and His life. True humility is coming to know and to live this truth.

"Jesus, 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 in human appearance he humbled Himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted Him..."(Ph 2:6-9) To put on the heart and mind of Jesus is to embrace true humility!

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us Your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love. Amen.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fr. Glenn".

Personal Witness

I was blessed to grow up in a very humble environment. My father was a factory worker, and my mother was a stay-at-home mom. I was second oldest in a family of six children. We lived in a baby-boom community, so we had a lot of children our own age in the rural neighborhood. All of my friends were in the same economic class, so I did not know anything else. We had a roof over our heads and food on the table, and we all worked as everyone had large gardens and hobby-farms to help feed their large families. We all had our chores to do every day. In addition, I worked on my grandfather's dairy farm and my great uncle's dairy farm on a regular basis.

My grandparents were very humble people, coming from very humble beginnings. All came from large families that made their way with modest subsistence dairy farms. I remember that my grandmother spoke often of the good-old-days. She spoke fondly of family life and would say, "We were poor back then, but did not know it." I can say the same thing. I was poor back then but didn't know it. We had family and we had faith.

Our parents were always pushing us to make something of our lives. I, and all of my siblings, went to college. Most of us achieved advanced degrees. We were always encouraged to take pride in our work and strive to be the best at whatever we did. As I advanced in my accounting profession, pride seemed to be very natural to me. I was proud of what I was able to achieve in a short period of time. Somewhere along the line I had lost the humility that was modeled for me my entire life. I was engulfed in the sin of pride but didn't know it. With pride came a big emptiness.

The big emptiness sent me searching for more. In my years of conversion, of coming back to the Lord, I learned true humility. As I got more and more involved in the Church and in my parish, I was invited (summoned) to teach faith formation. I felt extremely inadequate to teach. I had been away from the faith (spiritually not physically) for many years. Unfortunately, I had a pastor that I could not seem to say "no" to, so I began to teach high school faith formation. My fear drew me into hours of prayer and hours of reading and preparation for a single class. My first couple of classes were, in my not so humble opinion, a great success and I was proud of myself! The third week was a complete disaster! Nothing went right. I wanted to quit. I was again drawn into prayer. That was the answer. In my pride, I had stopped praying. I thought that it was me who was doing such a good job. It was the Holy Spirit, not me. I began to learn the virtue of humility.

As I entered priesthood, humility seemed to become more and more natural. Ordination was to that point in my life the most humbling experience. Then came my first Mass. As priest, every moment of every day I found to be humbling. I quickly learned that I could do nothing without the Holy Spirit. I learned to practice what I call "holy detachment." I put everything that I had into all that the Lord was calling me to do and then put it in God's hands. He is in charge!

As you priests and deacons know, the most humbling experience of our lives is serving at the Altar during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We are called to stand in *persona Christi*, in the person of Christ. It is the most humbling experience that a human being can know. To put on the heart and the mind of Christ, is to embrace true humility. The Incarnation and ultimately the Cross is the greatest act of humility that the world has ever seen. "Christ Jesus, 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 in appearance, He **humiliated** Himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross." (Phil 2: 6-8).

