

***Twenty-second Sunday Per Annum (C)***  
***August 28, 2016.***

*Perform your tasks with humility....To the humble the Lord reveals His secrets...By the humble He is glorified (Cf. Sir. 3: 17-20).*

The lessons of the Mass invite us to ponder the virtue of *humility*, the very foundation of our spiritual life. The word itself is a derivative of the Latin word for earth, *humus*. A humble person is grounded in reality; in his or her own reality and of course, in the truth of God. Humility is truth. A humble person can readily acknowledge his accomplishments, never losing sight of God our Heavenly Father, whose goodness has bestowed on us our abilities and talents. *The greater you are, the more you must humble yourself (Sir. 3:18)*. Humility enables us to avoid the seductions of the world and its spirit.

It is impossible to have a true relationship with God without the practice of humility for *to the humble the Lord reveals His secrets*. I have often spoken to you about the Saints for they are proof positive that the Gospel can be lived in a spirit of joy. When we truly take the Gospel to heart we can in fact achieve great things for God's greater glory and for the salvation and benefit of the human family. The Saints, like you and I, bore the great treasure of our faith, our relationship with God, *in vessels of clay*, (2 Cor. 4:7). What this means is that they, like us, also struggled with sin and its effects; with pride and perhaps, the most subtle of temptations, the illusion of self-sufficiency. It is said that in Heaven there are Saints who committed every sin, except the sin of pride. *By the humble He is glorified*. Likewise in Hell there are souls who practised every virtue, except the virtue of humility. *When calamity befalls someone proud, there is no healing*.

Today the *Martyrology*, the Book of Saints and Martyrs commemorates one of the greatest intellects of all time, St. Augustine of Hippo, the North African Bishop and Doctor of the Church who died on this day in 430. To say that he was brilliant is an understatement. The *Confessions*, his autobiography, is an account of his search for truth and wisdom, effectively for meaning and for purpose, and for integrity of life. His autobiography is an account of man's search for truth and it is rightly considered one of the greatest literary classics of all time. In what can be described as a torturous intellectual and moral journey, he, the gifted intellectual at last acknowledges the necessity of the virtue of humility: *I sought a way to obtain strength enough to enjoy you; but I did not find it until I embraced 'the mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus....To possess my God, the humble Jesus, I was not yet humble enough. I did not know what his weakness was meant to teach (VII. xviii 24)*.

*Learn from me; for I am gentle and humble of heart (Mt. 11:28)*. Our Lord invites all His disciples to the same school, regardless of our age or abilities. Our discipleship is a lifelong endeavour, and the goal of our relationship with God is that Christ Our Lord be formed in us; that we be transformed into His likeness, that we might possess the heart and mind of Christ. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is both the feast and school of faith. The Sacrifice of Our Lord on the Cross is a lesson in humility. Here we endeavour to *learn Christ (Eph. 4:20)* and we make our own the science and wisdom of the Cross. Another great philosopher and Saint, this one of the twentieth century, St. Teresa Benedicta of the

Cross spoke of the *science of the Cross*. In a meditation written in 1939 for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, this Carmelite Martyr wrote these timeless words: *The Saviour hangs before you with a pierced heart.... The world is in flames. The conflagration can also reach our house. But high above all flames towers the Cross. They cannot consume it. It is the path from earth to heaven. It will lift one who embraces it in faith, love and hope into the bosom of the Trinity.* These few words express all we need to know: the goal of our existence is a share in the life of the Trinity, and the means to achieve this goal is the Cross of Our Saviour. The embrace of the Cross will enable us to overcome any obstacle. This is why St. Paul declared: *We preach Christ crucified, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:23-24).* Christ Crucified is both the form and the content of the Christian message; and our fidelity to the Cross guarantees the authenticity of our discipleship and ultimately, our salvation. For this reason, each one of us in his or her own way must appropriate these words of the Apostle Paul and in all humility say: *But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world (Gal. 6:14).*

These words express timeless truths, true wisdom and we must in our turn, make this known in our time. We are rightly concerned by the evident lack of commitment to the faith that characterizes our times, and we must respond to this crisis accordingly. Understandably, there are many different opinions about the cause of the current state and an even greater number of proposed solutions. All of this can be confusing and even polemical. We must avoid these distractions. What is within the grasp of all of us here is the ability to take to heart Our Lord's invitation: *Learn from me; for I am gentle and humble of heart (Mt. 11:28).* Let us learn from Our Lord Himself to love God our Father and our neighbor with a supernatural love. Let us make the Mass the centre of life so that we will not only pray the Mass but also live the Mass. This is the secret of the Saints; and it is no secret at all for it is accessible to all of us. *By the humble is God glorified.*

It is here, in the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries that we learn to glorify God in humility and love. The sacred author may be said to be addressing us individually and collectively as we exercise our office of worship: *My child, perform your tasks with humility; then you will be loved by those whom God accepts.* In the celebration of the Mass we partake in the Liturgy of Heaven and the Saints who have gone before us are one with us in prayer *for we have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to the innumerable Angels...to the spirits of the righteous made perfect...to God the judge of all and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant (Cf. Heb. 12).* All of this takes place here. There is no better way of being united to Our Lord's redemptive work than to be mindful that the Mass is Calvary and that there is no better place to deepen our knowledge and love of God than the Mass. May the example of the Saints, especially St. Augustine, whose search for truth led him to the gentle and humble Saviour, encourage us to live and to worship with humility of spirit. *Let us then follow Christ's paths which He has revealed to us, above all the path of humility, which He himself became for us (St. Augustine, Sermo 23A, Liturgy of the Hours, Vol. IV, p. 189).*