Homily for the 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time(9/1/2019)

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Some years ago, there was a governor of New Jersey. Once, when campaigning for reelection as governor, he arrived late for a fund-raiser. He had skipped breakfast, had no time for lunch. So, he was famished.

In the serving line, the server gave the governor a piece of chicken. The governor said, “I am very hungry. May I please have another piece of chicken?”

The lady serving said, “No. I am sorry. I have been given orders, only one piece of chicken per person.”The governor repeated, “I am starved.” Again, he was told, “Only one piece of chicken per person.”

With his nagging hunger, the governor said, “Ma’am, do you know who I am? I am the governor of this state.”

Without missing a beat, she shot right back, “Do you know who I am? I am the lady in charge of chicken. Move along!”

Today’s readings tell us about humility. Humility begins with us knowing who we are. The lady serving chicken knew who she was; she is in charge of chicken. Real humility is about truth, truth about ourselves, our souls, and our need of God’s grace.

The word ‘humility’ has its root in Latin word ‘humus,’ which means ‘earth,’ or ‘ground.’ So, ‘humility’ means ‘keeping feet on the ground.’ The humble person has his or her feet on the ground.

True humility is not feeling bad about ourselves, or having a low opinion of ourselves, or thinking of ourselves as inferior to others.

Humility leads to true self-knowledge, honesty, realism, strength, and dedication to give ourselves to something greater than ourselves. Humility frees us to love and serve others selflessly, for their sake, rather than our own.

To be humble person, at first we need to know our reality honestly. The most basic fact of who we are, each one of us, is a child of God, made in the image of God. We are so precious to God, and we belong to Him.

All too often, we assume that our lives and our futures are in our hands. But, they are not. They are in God’s hands. He gave us life, and someday He will bring our time on earth to an end. So, we always need God’s love and mercy. Without Him, we can do nothing. It is our reality.

This truth reminds us that each day is a gift from God, a gift to be used wisely, joyfully for His glory. Thank God for the gift of today and for the gift of eternal life that awaits us in Heaven. This is a truth about ourselves. ‘Knowing ourselves’ is true humility.

Created in God’s image, the most natural impulse we have is to love God and to love our neighbor. That is the first part of who we are. And, God gave us a whole set of talents. Every one has different and unique talents.

When we use the gifts God gave to us, we are being humble. Humility is the virtue of being honest and real. The more self-centered we are, the more we forget about God and we forget about who we are.

In the Gospel today, Jesus tells us the way of humility. He says, “Take the lowest place.”

The prayer of St. Francis of Assisi gives us good advice about the lowest place. He prays, “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Let me seek not so much to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.”

Another way of humility is, as Jesus says, “When you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. Invite those who cannot repay you.”

Being a good Christian with all humility means giving love, never counting the costs. All people are equal in God’s eyes. All loved by God. Blessed are we when we treat everyone as an image of Christ.

As God’s blessed children, we give love without the costs, we serve those who cannot repay us, and we take the lowest place. This is the way of humility. Humility is truth in action, generosity in public, and joyfulness in being invited.

Jesus concludes His teaching, “You will be repaid at the Resurrection of the righteous.”

This week, let us ask ourselves if we are humble as we should be. There is only one banquet which really counts. It is in heaven, and God Himself is the host.

At the heavenly banquet, the words of Jesus will be repeated, “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”