**Humility**

All our readings today point us to the virtue we should always desire, humility. Humility is the virtue that makes us die to self and allow God to work in us. It allows God to be God in our lives. Without humility, we will not be open to receiving God’s graces. We will be full of pride which is emptiness. We would be full of ourselves not knowing that actually like a car running out of gas, we will only run on gas fumes for a brief moment before we are completely on empty.

Pride will allow the evil one to come in and dominate our lives and we will be without peace. Pride is the antithesis of humility and the Devil is the master of pride and the master of misery. He will never be satisfied nor have peace. So he is always prowling all over the world looking for those who would join him in his misery.

Sirach in our first reading, told us to willingly serve God. Serving God willingly, means we die to self. It means being humble. It means being lowly. When we serve God willingly, we will have no agenda of our own. Instead, we have a longing to do the will of God who is just and judges irrespective of any person’s status. Sirach said, God hears the prayers of the lowly or humble of heart such as orphans, widow and the oppressed, and that God would act favorably on their behalf.

Without humility, we cannot genuinely serve God. Instead, we will be serving ourselves. When we serve self, we would become prideful. Our focus would be on self and not on God. By serving God we die to self and we open ourselves to His grace. It is then we will receive His abundant blessings and be at peace with God, others and self.

Saint Paul in our second reading while imprisoned, also brought out the need to be humble and to attribute the success of all good things to God and not ourselves. He indicated that he was being poured out to God like a libation or as a sacrifice. As he said in Romans 12:1 when he asked the Romans to offer their bodies up as a living sacrifice pleasing to God.

Saint Paul accounted is faithfulness to the power of God and not to himself. He said in humility, that it was God who gave him the strength to proclaim the Good News of God’s kingdom to the Gentiles. We the Gentiles, are the recipient of the mission he received from God who was with him through all types of trials and tribulations.

I would like to share with you, a story I came across not too long ago. It is about a priest and a taxi driver. The priest knew the taxi Driver fairly well as a reckless driver. The taxi Driver died and went to heaven. Then the priest died and went to heaven too. On meeting St Peter at the gate, the Priest was taken to where he would live. He noticed that it was a small dingy house.

On looking down the street, he was surprised to see the taxi Driver in heaven. He then noticed that the taxi driver had a big beautiful mansion. He looked at his house and looked at the taxi driver’s house three times incredulous! He then told St Peter that while he was on earth, he worked hard and always had a full church. How come in heaven, the taxi driver has a bigger house.

St Peter told him that while he was on earth, his preaching put his parishioners to sleep! While when the taxi driver was driving, people were praying and calling on God to save them!

In our Gospel reading, Jesus in His parable gave us an example of what pride is like and what humility is like. In the Pharisee, we see a man who was prideful and who thought he achieved all the good deeds he listed in his heart on his own. First of all, we can contrast him to Paul in our second reading who also said he had competed well and won the race. But in the end, Paul gave glory to God.

The Pharisee did not give glory to God from whom all good things come. He, also in his heart, put down the rest of humanity and the Tax collector as low lives. What is lacking in all the virtues that the Pharisee had, was humility. Humility is the virtue that is pleasing to God. Humility is the mother of all virtues. Anyone who is lacking in humility but has all other virtues would be like a person St. Bonaventure referred to has carrying dust in the wind.

According to St. Thomas of Villanova, ***“Humility is the mother of many virtues. From it spring obedience, holy fear, reverence, patience, modesty, mildness, and peace; for, whoever is humble easily obeys all, fears to offend any, maintains peace with all, shows himself affable to all, is submissive to all, does not offend or displease any, and does not feel the insults which may be inflicted upon him. He lives happy and contented, and in great peace”.***

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask Him for the virtue of humility.