

Twenty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 1, 2019
Fr. Rick Lorenz

Homily

A few years ago, I was part of an RCIA class studying Scripture. We learned about King Solomon. The course material presented him as a tyrant, but it didn't sit right with me. It was true, but incomplete. We know Solomon as a man of wisdom. He found a just settlement between the two women who contended for one baby: give him to the one who was willing to give him up. The Queen of Sheba found his wisdom to be remarkable. She said "Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel (1 Kings 10:9)!" And the Lord was the source of Solomon's wisdom. He had prayed for it: "Give your servant an understanding mind to govern your people (1 Kings 3:9)." And God rewarded him: "Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you (1 Kings 3:12)." God gave him "wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and largeness of mind like the sand on the seashore (1 Kings 5:9 or 1 Kings 4:29)." God also gave him riches and honour, as well as a command: "walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and commands (1 Kings 3:14)." The thing is, Solomon didn't pray for piety and the fear of the Lord. His success led to pride, then greed, injustice and envy: a violation of the tenth commandment.

Sir 3:17-20, 28-29
Ps 68
Heb 12:18-19, 22-24a
Lk 14:1, 7-14

He received riches from the nations, took from them 1000 wives, and then began to follow their gods: violating the first. His reign began with peace, unity and contentment, but near its end God became angry. His kingdom became split from within, and then whittled by empires from without.

In today's Gospel, Jesus told the Pharisees, "whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted (Lk 14:11)." He reminded them of words they already knew: "The greater you are, the more you must humble yourself; so you will find favour in the sight of the Lord (Sir 3:18)." Jesus humbled himself. The Son of God, he was born in a stable to a poor family and lauded by shepherds. To enter the Kingdom of God, we have to become humble and little as well. This way Christ can be formed in us. We give ourselves to the marvelous exchange: God became man and we share in his divinity.

There are three things we can do. First, against your pride, realize humility. See that the good within you comes from God. God gives his goodness to all. This goodness binds us together in one body. Second, if you feel envy, counter it with kindness. Don't feel sadness at others' success, but rejoice in their progress. This gives glory to God. Third, begin your prayer by acknowledging your sinfulness, by asking for forgiveness.

This humble start renews a covenant with God; a relationship within your heart. It can lead to the greatest gift: contemplation that makes you like him. It's the pattern of our liturgy, when we "acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries." It's the pattern of the Eucharist, where Jesus invites "the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind (Lk 14:13)." We bless Jesus for this invitation that we cannot repay. We exalt him by remembering that "God gives the desolate a home to live in; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity (Ps 68:7)." Each generation invites the next, through the promise and commitment of the sacraments. They join us, and "come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22)." They come to the Church, which is awaiting its fulfillment with the resurrection of the righteous. Together, we join God in his humility and are exalted in return.