

My Brothers and Sisters,

Humility is the primary theme of today's readings, and the theme is very straightforward. The point of the parable in the Gospel could not be more clear.

When I listen to one of my college-age friends, it is very clear that very few things irritate her more than people who are arrogant. Today's reading from Sirach begins by telling us that a person who lives and acts humbly will be loved even more than a giver of gifts. Those who are great in the eyes of the world find favor with God when they humble themselves. From one perspective, humility is seeing ourselves as we really are, i.e., seeing ourselves as God sees us. When we are honest with ourselves, we see ourselves as God sees us.

From another perspective, humility is recognizing that we are not self made. All that we are and all that we have are God's gifts to us directly or indirectly through others. Our DNA comes from our parents. They are also the ones who raise us. Teachers and coaches have a profound influence on young people, an influence they do not necessarily recognize. In my generation, other parents helped parent us. Our peers heavily influence us sometimes for good and sometimes for bad. In fact, every encounter we have has the possibility of influencing us. As believers, the Church influences us. We are influenced by what is going on around us. As I have said multiple times, I think COVID has influenced all of us negatively. We are influenced by social media. The truth is we do not even know all the influences on us.

The reading suggests a couple other elements of humility. Sirach wrote, "*What is too sublime for you, seek not, into things beyond your strength search not.*" Wisdom and humility go together. One of the best evidences of both humility and wisdom is knowing what we do not know. There is a story that the Delphic Oracle once said that Socrates was the wisest man in the world. Socrates did not believe it, so he set out to visit all the wise men of his time. When he finished his journey, he concluded that he was indeed the wisest man in the world because he knew what he did not know. A humble and wise person knows what he or she does not know. Consequently, a humble and wise person is open to new learning. Sirach also wrote, "*...an attentive ear is the joy of the wise.*" In other words, people who are humble and wise are good listeners.

If there is true humility, there is also false humility. If there are true humility and false humility, there are also true pride and false pride. The big problem today is not false humility or true pride. The big problem today is false pride. False pride typically is a product of insecurity. The person who needs everyone to see how great or important he is has false pride. The person who always has to be right has false pride. The person who always needs to win has false pride.

My brothers and sisters, it seems to me that today most of us show lack of humility by looking down upon or thinking we are better than someone else. We often look down on the poor and the marginalized. We often look down on people whose lifestyle choices are different from our own. We sometimes look down on people of different races, ethnicities, religions, or even political parties. Some people look down on those who do not have as much education as they have. Some people look down on older people while other people look down on younger people. The list could go on. We often look down on people or think we are better than people who are different from us. We probably all need to ask ourselves if we are truly humble. Today's reading from the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us once again that we are God's people called to holiness of life, which requires humility.