

22nd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

St. Luke 14:1, 7-14

It is what we do in private, when there is nobody around, that determines the truth of our character. It was what we do when there is no one to praise us. That is humility. It was what we do when there are only people who will criticise us. That is courage. It is telling the truth when I could get away with telling a lie. It is standing up for the faith when nobody knows who I am.

Humility is not the same thing as self-deprecation, of putting oneself down, of denying one's abilities and pretending that one is less than one is. Humility, as taught by St. Thomas Aquinas, is knowing oneself in truth. That is, knowing oneself with all flaws and with all talents. God, in His wisdom, has granted to each of us the ability to do something well, that shares in the perfection of God. No one person has the ability to do all things well. Instead, we are expected to build up others and to be built up by others. What I can do well I do well for the glory of God and for the benefit of others. What I cannot do well I admit to and seek out those who can do this or that thing well, for that, too, gives glory to God. It is not shameful to admit that I lack ability in this or that way—it is honesty, it is humility. On the other hand, to pretend that I can do all things well is dishonest and it is stupidity.

The Lord Himself first chose twelve men to share in His mission. He later chose seventy others to continue His preaching and to heal the sick. He has in all ages since chosen men and women, boys and girls, to share in His mission. He has chosen every one of you that is baptised to share in His mission.

At a summer Bible camp for Catholic school children, a seven-year-old boy won the silver medal in the football competition. He was so proud of his achievement that he wore the medal around his neck day and night. On the last day of the camp, as the children were leaving, the boy said to one of the

counsellors that he had left his medal in the chapel and would the counsellor get it for him? The counsellor had a look around the chapel but could not find the medal. The boy left for home. As the counsellors were preparing to leave they had one last look around the campsite to see if anything had been left behind. One of the counsellors, having a look around the chapel, found the boy's medal, but it was in a place nobody had thought to look. The boy had stacked chairs together, one on top of the other, and climbed up to the top of the crucifix so that he could hang his silver medal around the neck of Christ.

When, in *A.D.* 1903, Cardinal Sarto was elected Pope and took the name Pius X, it was the custom, as it is today with all Bishops, that when a man or a woman met the Pope they would kiss his ring. Pope Pius X proudly told his mother that when people approach him they are to always kiss his ring. His mother duly kissed his ring, but then said to him showing her wedding ring, "Now you kiss my ring — for without it, you would never have received yours."

That seven-year-old boy from Bible camp was rightly pleased with his athleticism and with his winning the silver medal, and in his simple act of hanging the medal around the neck of Christ on the Cross, he showed that he knew from where his abilities came. Pope Pius X was rightly honoured to have been raised to the Throne of St. Peter and to accept the respect of his people, but his mother reminded him that whatever gains we make in this life we must always look back to those who brought us this far and always look up to He who granted us the grace to succeed.