

Trinity XVII

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[0 : 0 0] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Please be seated.

All of us here today are formed by a liturgy. Now, obviously, the liturgy we participate here today, we can see that.

We say the prayers, we listen to the priest, we participate and receive the sacrifice of the Mass.

But we also participate in a liturgy that the culture around us decides to offer. We either hear and respond to the worldly call of society, or we hear and respond to the call of God.

In the latter portion of our Gospel text today, our Lord beckons us to hear and respond to his call through way of a parable. He originally says this parable because he noticed that some at the dinner party were taking the more honorable seats.

[1 : 1 3] The people at this party were Pharisees and lawyers. The house they gathered in belonged to one of the rulers of the Pharisees. All of these people would have had places of honor, according to the Jews, because they were teachers and rulers in Judaism.

Starting the parable, he talks about how at a wedding feast, there are some seats that are designated for those who have higher honor than most. Jesus warns against going for the highest place of honor, lest you get told by one who invited you, and the one who is supposed to sit at that place, that the place of honor does not belong to you.

He then finishes with the famous phrase, For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. It would have been easy at that time to take the words of Jesus just as good advice, something that a wise person versed in etiquette would entrust to you.

However, we have the luxury of understanding the fuller and fullest meaning of this text. St. Paul writes in his epistle to the Philippians about humility as well.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men.

[2 : 3 7] And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore, God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name.

Here we see the one who has truly humbled himself and was then exalted. The divine Son of God assumed a human nature. This is the ultimate form of humiliation.

If we think more about it, of all people to take the best seat at a wedding or a dinner party, it should have been Christ. He could have taken the seat and it would not have been boastful or prideful. Our Lord truly is the one who has highest honor and status.

However, he did not consider his equality with the Father to be something that he needed to boast in. He came down to a place that was lower than he deserved.

If anything, this should really cause us to think deeply about how we view ourselves. I guarantee that all of us, in some way or another, consider a place of status or honor something that we can or should grasp for ourselves.

[3 : 50] If our Lord didn't operate that way, then maybe we shouldn't either. This should be the response we have in the liturgy of the church.

The call we hear is the humiliation of Christ, and our response should be to echo the very same humility. If we do not, we will be humbled by God himself.

The call of the world is rather quite different. It is one of self-exaltation, encouraging us to recognize our own self-worth. To preface this, I must say that our modern society does get some things right.

While society has many things that are wrong, there is a widespread awareness by organizations and individuals that we are suffering from a mental health crisis. People are more anxious and depressed than ever before.

Most people that we come into contact with have something going on, either in their families, friend groups, or in their own personal lives. The reason for that is this.

[4 : 58] We have been told by our society, sometimes even by our friends and by our families, that success and improvement in our lives should be our top priority. We should be the best at what we're doing.

We should not accept any less than that. When we accept that as reality and then realize all the areas where we are not successful, we become depressed, anxious, and self-critical to the point of self-hatred.

It's very troubling to think about at times. Our culture has seen what that worldview does to us, and it has an answer. Love yourself. Love yourself. I am the most important thing in my life.

I need to make sure my needs, happiness, and desires are met before I can do anything for anyone else. Now, there is a sense in which we have to take care of our bodies and our spirits.

If you've ever flown on an airplane, the flight attendant always says to put the breathing mask around your face first before you help the person next to you in case of an emergency. You can't properly help someone else breathe if you're gasping for air yourself.

[6 : 08] Even Jesus himself ate and slept when he needed. With all that said, we must remember that Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve.

He makes it clear that he came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father. Because we have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have been called to the same calling.

He that wishes to save his life will lose it, but he that loses his life for Christ's sake will find it. Brothers and sisters, we also have been invited to a wedding feast.

At the end of days when our Lord returns, the wedding between him and the church, his body, will take place. Afterwards, there will be a celebratory wedding feast, which is depicted in Revelation chapter 19.

We want to have places of honor at this table. If we spend our days in self-exaltation, showering ourselves with self-love, we should not expect to have a place of honor at this table.

[7 : 14] The only sure way to have a place of honor at the table is to live a life of humility, the way that Christ lived his life on earth. Avoid self-love, for that will lead you on the path to destruction.

Love Jesus Christ and humble yourself, for this is the true way of the cross. Lord, we pray thee that thy grace may always prevent and follow us and make us continually to be given to all good works.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen.