

# Trinity XVII

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

- [ 0 : 00 ] I have to confess something. I got your attention. Whenever I'm writing a sermon, I often feel like a broken record, repeating the same things over and over again.
- But there's a reason for this. The apostles and writers of sacred scripture were repeating major themes due to how shocking and how different they were for the newly baptized Christian living in the ancient pagan culture or world.
- And what we heard here in our epistle reading this morning by St. Paul is an important example of this.
- St. Paul says again here in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 1 through 6, I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all.
- [ 1 : 39 ] This extolling of humility was a very radical concept for the ancient Greco-Roman world. The ancient world scoffed at such an idea.
- But the church not only embraces this practice, it becomes one of the main virtues in living out the Christian faith. So, what is humility?
- Well, let me first begin by telling you what it's not. Humility is not mere self-deprecation. What I mean by that is always putting down oneself in order to appear as humble to others.
- That's not humility. Humility is not virtue signaling. Like wearing a mask when driving all alone in your car. That's not humility.
- That's just crazy. Humility. Humility is spelled out by the Apostle Paul in four different actions here in this section of Ephesians chapter 4.
- [ 2 : 51 ] First, it's lowliness. Lowliness. This is another way of expressing the virtue of humility. But the word lowliness means putting others before self.
- Now you understand how radical this idea is. It's going out of our way to serve other people, even if that is an inconvenience to us.
- A husband who seeks to serve his wife. And a wife, her husband, is a portrait of humility. A worker who puts in effort and is willing to go above and beyond what is asked.
- That is a person practicing lowliness and humility. A parishioner who is willing to help clean up or help volunteer to help the elderly.
- That is one who is practicing lowliness and humility. A person who is willing to engage with others, not monopolizing a conversation by incessantly talking about oneself.
- [ 4 : 04 ] That is a sign of humility. One that is not always sharing their opinion or feeling as though the world wants to know their opinion all the time.

Is practicing humility and lowliness. Such a person is attempting to live a life of lowliness. Following the way of our Lord.

The second aspect of humility here, according to St. Paul, is gentleness. Gentleness. Gentleness does not seek to repay evil with evil.

Gentleness is responding with charity. And wishing good upon another person. Gentleness is being gracious towards others.

Not always looking to bring up the negative. Or dwelling on the bad. Or living in the past. A gracious person is a gentle person.

[ 5 : 06 ] And a gentle person is a gracious person. Long-suffering is the third characteristic of humility. This means that we are able to put up with people who we deem to be difficult.

Just as others are willing to put up with our idiosyncrasies. And we have a bunch. We are to be people who shoulder the burden of others.

Because that produces a life of prayer for others. It produces action for the good of our neighbor.

And the final point here that St. Paul makes regarding humility. Is unity. Unity.

He states this in verse 3 by saying, Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. One of the most important points for a Christian is not to be a persistent contrarian.

[ 6 : 19 ] We are called to be teachable people. And we are to endeavor to keep the bond of peace by not seeking to be argumentative or difficult.

I remember a comment by one of my older members after I graduated from seminary and I took the first church when I was up in the Adirondacks in upstate New York.

He gave me some very wise advice. This older gentleman said, No one should ever play the devil's advocate because he has enough of those doing his bidding.

Great advice. This understanding of unity is not merely holding hands and singing kumbaya. Unity is not just agreeing in order to avoid conflict or get along.

That's not unity. Unity flows from the unity between the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Which we now share in by virtue of our baptism, our faith in God.

[ 7 : 29 ] That is why St. Paul ends by saying, There is one body, one spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all and through all and in you all.

In other words, unity is the opposite of pride, opposite of being a contrarian. It means being a servant for the sake of the body of Christ.

And unity is the declaration of our creedal faith now put into action. Friends, the church gives witness to the world when we follow the way of lowliness, the way of gentleness, being long-suffering, and striving to be unified in our beliefs and in our practices.

Striving to walk in the virtue of humility is following the way of our master and our Lord, who washed the feet of his disciples, who reached out to outcasts and sinners, who was patient and long-suffering toward others, and who was completely unified with his father, seeking to bring all glory and honor to him.

[ 8 : 58 ] Our calling is to strive to live humble lives. As the Lord says, recorded in Isaiah chapter 66, verse 2, But this is the one to whom I will look, he is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

As baptized Christians who have put on Christ, this is our calling as well. As St. Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 5, verse 5, Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility.

Humility toward one another. For God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. Therefore, friends, I am not telling you something new, something you haven't heard before, but it's something we all need to hear daily.

Why? So that we repent. So that we turn from our arrogance and our pride and practice this virtue of humility that reflects our calling as baptized children, following the way of our humble King, Jesus.

As our Lord reminds us in our gospel text this morning, for whoever exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.

[ 10 : 40 ] Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.