

HOMILY 8.28.2016

BEAR WRONGS PATIENTLY

“People are unrealistic, illogical, and self-centered. Love them anyway.” Mother Teresa once said.

Saint Augustine once wrote, “If you should ask me what are the ways of GOD, I would tell you that the first is humility, the second is humility, and the third is humility.” This simple-yet-profound statement highlights the emphasis on humility we find the First Reading and Gospel of today’s liturgy: “Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God” and “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted”.

Mother Teresa, the foundress of the Missionary Sisters of Charity will be canonized by Pope Francis next Sunday. She may be the perfect example of the humility JESUS calls for in today’s Gospel. She once said, *“The path that will make us more like JESUS is the path to humility.”* Humility is the quality by which a person considering his or her own defects has a humble opinion of himself or herself and willingly submits to GOD and to others for GOD's sake. This was the epitome of Mother Teresa. She left her homeland of Albania when she was only 19 years old and joined the Sisters of Our Lady of Loreto. She professed her permanent vows at the age of 27 and was sent to the convent in Calcutta to teach at the only Catholic school in the country where most of the students were from more or less well-to-do families. But Mother Teresa knew that outside the convent walls many human beings were living in shacks. She could have hidden behind the convent walls but one night she became aware of a calling to leave the convent and consecrate herself to help the poor, living among them.

Today there are more than 4500 Missionaries of Charity throughout the world all living the same selfless life Mother Teresa demonstrated during her 69 years of service to the poor. The Sisters treat the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind – all who are in need. And they rely completely on Divine Providence to support themselves.

Mother Teresa received 124 awards during her life including the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize but all the monies she received were given to the poor. She lived a life of true humility and service. We can learn a great deal from this remarkable woman. Here are two excerpts from her book, *Mother Teresa, In My Own Words*: *“When a poor person dies of hunger, it has not happened because GOD did not take care of him or her. It has happened because neither you nor I wanted to give that person what he or she needed. We have refused to be instruments of love in the hands of GOD to give the poor a piece of bread, to offer them clothing with which to ward off the cold.”*

When she visited China in 1969 one of the Communist party's top members asked her: *"Mother Teresa, what is a communist to you?"* She replied: *"A child of GOD, a brother, a sister of mine."* "Well," he exclaimed, *"you think highly of us. But where did you get that idea?"* She responded: *"From GOD himself. He said: 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"* [Mt 25:40]

In this Jubilee Year of Mercy Pope Francis has also called for priests and deacons to preach about the spiritual works of mercy. This Sunday, the Spiritual work of mercy is *"Bear wrongs patiently."* In our materially rich but spiritually derived western society we have difficulty bearing wrongs period! Forget about patiently! Are you kidding? When that jerk cuts you off in traffic or jumps you in line at the supermarket or a dirtbag steals the parking spot you were waiting for or honks his horn at you because you are not responding fast enough to a green light you're supposed to bear it patiently? I don't think so! How about a nasty comeback or rude comment or honking my horn too? That is definitely the norm though it is NOT a spiritual work of mercy. Being patient and kind in the face of rude, insensitive people is difficult and impossible without GOD's help. We cannot "perform" this work of mercy on our own, though we must will to do so. By its very nature, this work of mercy requires divine grace. Grace is the supernatural love of GOD working through us. It is this supernatural love alone that is capable of bearing injustice.

We have another great example in our patron Saint, Rose of Lima, whose feast we celebrated this past week. St. Rose was born in 1586 and died in 1617. She was devoted to JESUS and accepted her struggles with patience and grace. She fasted daily; slept only two hours per night in order to have more time for prayer, worked tirelessly in the garden to help her family, cared for the sick and infirmed in her own home and wore a heavy silver crown studded with thorns. In the reading for her feast day, she writes that the LORD spoke to her and said: *"Let men know that without the burden of afflictions it is impossible to reach the height of grace. Let them know that the gifts of grace increase as the struggles increase." This is the only true stairway to paradise and without the cross they can find no road to climb to heaven." If only mortals would learn how great it is to possess divine grace, how beautiful, how noble, how precious. How many riches it hides within itself, how many joys and delights!" Without doubt all men throughout the world would seek trouble, infirmities and torments, instead of good fortune, in order to attain the unfathomable treasure of grace."*

So the next time you are tempted to talk about that person (*you know who they are*) that did that awful thing that one time and has never apologized – remember the example of St. Rose and the divine grace you can receive and keep your mouth shut! Bearing wrongs patiently is hard! It means extending unconditional love and forgiveness to nasty

people who despise you and want to harm you. It means desiring their happiness. The Year of Mercy is no mere call from Pope Francis to act decent in public, to treat co-workers with kindness and to smile at strangers. NO – this is the time to show extraordinary forgiveness to those whom we dislike, disagree with, and to amend relationships that have been destroyed. Especially during the final days of this contentious political season we will all have ample opportunities to bear wrongs patiently. Think of the immensity of divine grace you can receive by your silence and keep still.

I began this homily with a quote from Mother Teresa and I would like to end it with another:

“If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.

If you are honest, people may cheat you. Be honest anyway.

If you find happiness, people may be jealous. Be happy anyway.

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have and it may never be enough. Give your best anyway.

For you see, in the end, it is between you and GOD. It was never between you and them anyway.”