

Imagine if you came into to church today and you were stopped by the usher. You were stopped because they wanted to know what percentage of your income that you gave to Cathedral. Funny, but actually what Jesus was confronting.

Then imagine if they seated you according to what you gave: Big givers in the front, while the seats in the back are the cheap seats. Sounds more like a country club rather than a church.

I remember someone telling me about how they raised money to provide pews or chairs in the new church they were going to build: They had each family or an individual buy a pew or chair. Great idea as they are able to purchase all the pews needed for the church.

Problems came, however, during the feasts of Christmas and Easter, or early bird visitors: the pews were filled with people who had not paid for them. People were angry, complaining, "I deserve a seat, I paid for it!"

In today's gospel Jesus is condemning both the hosts and the guests for such an attitude. The hosts because they were inviting only the wealthy, beautiful types and the guests because they were seeking seats of honor, seats they felt they deserved.

+Baron Rothschild once, when asked about seating important guests, said, "Those that matter won't mind where they sit, and those who do mind, don't matter."

Just as Jesus challenges his fellow guests, so he challenges us. He warns us that those who will be saved will not be people like the Pharisees.

The deeper message of this parable is that if we exalt ourselves, we are going to face embarrassment before the judgment seat of God, the Host who has invited us to the banquet of life, in which we humble ourselves for the poorest of poor - People who have distinguished themselves only by their need.

In all this, we find the origin of the word, "shrink" for psychiatrist. The psychiatrist or "shrink" has to shrink one's head down to get to reality, to see who they really are, not who they think they are or think they should be.

+Such people like the French philosopher Auguste Comte, might be a worthy patient, as he was heard uttering this mournful cry as he expired, "What an irreparable loss!"

+Churchill once said humbly, "We are all worms", but then added, "but I am a glow worm." People often tried to humiliate Churchill, but his tongue was known to humble them, as Winston Churchill was equally adept at the put-down. There is a famous exchange between Winston Churchill and Lady Astor. Lady Astor did not like Winston Churchill, so one day she said to him, "If I were your wife, I'd put poison in your tea." Churchill said, "If I were your husband, I'd drink it."

Humility is a strange phenomenon. As a rule, when we discover we have it, we lose it. Humility is like a rare flower -- put it on display, and it instantly wilts and loses its fragrance!

The word “humility” comes from the Latin word (who-mus) humus or ground. So “humility” basically means “keeping our feet on the ground.” Humility is, first of all, clarity and honesty about ourselves, the gifts and talents we have and, more importantly, about the gifts we don’t have, about our limitations.

Being humble doesn’t mean debasing yourself or thinking you are the worst person in the world – that is called low esteem. No, we are all made in God’s image and likeness. We’re all children of God, redeemed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In the eyes of God, we are all equally important.

There seem to be two acceptable types of humility: The first is self-effacement: the habit of doing good deeds, or indeed just daily work, secretly or anonymously, without expecting thanks.

It might be the brother who allows his little sister her choice of TV programs. It is the student who congratulates another who scored higher. It is the athlete who does not rejoice in the error of his opponent. They are the real winners of eternal glory.

The second acceptable type of humility is linked to the first: the habit of being under holy authority. It means simply the acknowledgment, all the time, of a power much higher than that of earthly authority, in whose hands we are and to whom we owe allegiances.

Such humility is based on the psychological awareness that everything I have is a gift from God and, therefore, I have no reason to elevate myself above others. On the contrary, I must use these God-given gifts to help others.

+Brother André Bessette is our example. Sickness and weakness dogged him from birth. Adopted at 12, when both parents had died, he became a farmhand. Various trades followed: shoemaker, baker, blacksmith—all failures. Add to this he was barely 5 ft tall.

+He would later say to this, “The smallest brushes that the artist paints produces some of the most beautiful paintings.” No matter who we are, when we place our small lives in God’s hands, God can do wonderful things.

At 25, he applied for entrance into the Congregation of the Holy Cross. After a year’s novitiate, he was not admitted because of his weak health. His bishop intervened and he was finally received.

He was given the humble job of doorkeeper at Notre Dame College in Montreal, with additional duties as sacristan, laundry worker and messenger. “When I joined this community, the superiors showed me the door, and I remained 40 years,” he said.

In his little room near the door, he spent much of the night on his knees. When he heard someone was ill, he visited to bring cheer and to pray with the sick person. Word of healing powers began to spread. The pile of crutches, canes and braces grew.

When an epidemic broke out at a nearby college, André volunteered to nurse. Not one person died. The trickle of sick people to his door became a flood. In the end he needed four secretaries to handle the 80,000 letters he received each year.

That sickly little boy died at the age of 92. Over one million people attended his funeral. He possessed nothing and nothing possessed him. He was canonized in 2010 and in the pope's words, "He lived the beatitude of a pure heart." Yes, the first shall thebe last and the last shall be first.