

Christmas Mass Homily (C)
December 25, 2009

“The greatest of kings born in the most humble of all places. God made into flesh.”

This is the epitome of humility. No other persons or acts can compare with this, namely, God, who is all things, coming down from heaven and lowering Himself so as to be one with us and thus, help us to know Him.

And even though we can't repeat this single perfect act of humility, it doesn't mean we can't try.

In December of 1983, two years after John Paul II was shot, this same Pope goes to visit the very same man who tried to kill him.

In doing so, he gave us an example of how to lower ourselves and show humility, love, and forgiveness for another human being.

In the Spring of 2006, Tyson Gentry, who some of us may be familiar with, landed awkwardly during practice one day and broke a vertebra in his neck and thus, losing the ability to walk.

Soon after, for the next few years, Coach Jim Tressel continued to visit the injured Buckeye and invited him to still be a part of the Ohio State Football team.

Doing so, Tressel illustrated yet another way that we can humble ourselves and show another compassion, sympathy, and love.

These two examples are only a glimpse of the vast humility that God showed us in sending His only Son to live among us on earth. And why did God humble Himself...why did God lower Himself to become like us?

“God humbled Himself to allow us to get near him so that we could give our love in exchange for His, so that our freedom might bow, not only at the sight of His power, but also before the wonder of his humility,” a humility that is shown in “Jesus Christ, whose Father made heaven and earth, being born in a manger! There was nowhere else for the Lord of all creation to come into the world to be with us” (St. Josemaria Escriva).

In other words, God lowered Himself and became man so that we would be given the great privilege and honor of getting near God, touching God, and loving God.

What greater humility is there than this?!

And to add to the blessing, we are told that He came for all mankind.

“We have each been given a gift” as Mary says in the movie, *The Nativity*.

All of us...God came for all of us...from the shepherds who were the first to witness God made flesh to the three wise kings who came bearing gold, frankincense, and myrrh for the newborn babe.

For the poor and wealthy, for the sick and healthy, for the non-faithful and faithful, for those who follow the law and the commandments and for those who disregard them, for the young and the old, for all people everywhere God took on flesh.

But, as we reflect on the birth of our Lord and Savior and on his entire human life, we see a pattern of those who are favored above others, namely, the humble, the outcasts, the lowly.

God did not appear to the three wise kings first nor to King Herod. Rather, God appeared first and foremost to the shepherds who were tending their flocks by night.

Shepherds, mangy, nasty, lonely people whom others had no desire whatsoever to talk with or even associate with.

And God chose to appear to them first...on their turf...and in their time. What humility!

We see the favoritism of the lowly and the humble as Jesus grows up. For instance, who were the first people Jesus called to follow him and be his disciples?

Not royalty...but, fisherman.

Fishermen were people who held an ordinary, dirty, and thankless job in the community.

It was often life threatening because being out on the sea in the middle of a storm on a 20 foot wooden boat was not the safest of all things.

Nonetheless, these people did it to earn a living and provide for their family.

It was not extravagant by any means.

And so, what are we to learn from all this...from Jesus choosing shepherds, fisherman, and the like?

What are we to take away?

The lesson here is that Jesus, the Son of God and God himself, cares about the humble, the lowly, the outcasts, and the like.

In other words, God cares and wants to life up everyone, but most importantly, those who are rejected by their community.

These people, as it were, are the chosen ones of God.

Given the fact that God came for all people, why is it too much to ask for us to sacrifice some of our time to spend with our best friend and the One who loves us the most?

The Gospel speaks about there being no room in the inn for Mary, Joseph, and Jesus.

In other words, people were not willing to make room for Jesus, the Son of God.

How are we doing the same thing?

What is keeping us from welcoming Christ?

Are we even willing to make room for the Son of God who wants so much for us to recognize his presence and love so that we may be drawn to show him appreciation and love in return?

Sundays are meant as a day designed and created for God.

Yes, we are encouraged to spend time relaxing and resting, time with family and friends, time to prepare for the coming week, and so forth.

But, if we begin putting all this in front of God and telling Him, “I just don’t have time for Church,” or “Sunday is my day to sleep in and relax from work,” or “I like to spend time with family on Sunday and going to Church cuts into that,” if we find ourselves saying any of these things or similar things, then we’ve successfully not made any room for God in our lives or in our hearts.

And without God in our lives, directing us and helping us along the journey that is life, where do we expect to end up?

Without a grounding that is God, why should we strive to be our best, to be successful...why should we do anything worthwhile?

We need to be anchored in God, an anchoring that begins with practicing our faith. Otherwise, we are destined to go through life aimlessly, without purpose, and without hope.

But, if we work from the foundation that is God, if we strive to be people on whom God’s favor rests, then we will experience peace, fulfillment, and endless joy.

And so, may we pray to humble ourselves and be found wanting and yearning to welcome Jesus into our homes, our work, our families, our hearts, our very lives.

I pray that this message takes root in all our hearts so that I can say, “See you at Mass” and mean it.