

“The greater you are, the more you should behave humbly, and then you will find favour with the Lord,” as we heard from the Book of Ecclesiasticus.

What does it mean to be humble?

The Book of Ecclesiasticus tells us:

“The heart of the sensible man will reflect on parables”

Let’s look, then, at the parable Jesus tells us about humility today.

In the parable Jesus gives of the Wedding feast, He concludes, **“do not take your seat in the place of honour.”**

In other words:

Don’t consider yourself as great. Remember how little you are.

And the moral of this parable is this: If we do forget how little we are, we’ll be reminded just how little we are in embarrassing rather than

edifying circumstances!

“For,” as Jesus said, **“everyone who exalts himself will be humbled.”**

Imagine having to give up your seat for someone else.

But, of course, such humiliation would never happen if you were always conscious of your littleness.

“For,” as Jesus said, **“a man who humbles himself will be exalted.”**

Father’s Day provides us with a good opportunity to grow in our understanding and appreciation of humility. Our gratitude for our fathers first began when we were children.

Have you ever wondered why the imagination of children is so big? Because their minds are so small.

To a child, his father is bigger than any other man in the world.

Every child endows his father with two attributes: *omnipotence* and *omniscience* (i.e., all-powerful and all-knowing). A child thinks that his father can do all things, and knows all things. The father to the child is ‘God,’ and the child worships him in secret. He’s stronger than any other man in the world, and he knows more than any other father in the world.

Have you ever heard a child say: “I know I’m right... Because my Daddy told me!”

The father, then, takes God’s place in the home and reveals – whether he knows it or not – the justice of God.

Take another example...

Every child loves the story of Jack and the Beanstalk.

Because for a child every beanstalk towers up to the very skies. Now, as a matter of fact, bean stalks do not scrape the stars. But to a child they do! Because the child is so small, everything is so big in relation to child – even the beanstalk. Only when the child grows big do beanstalks become small. Only by being little do we ever discover anything big.

Now, there’s a close connection between *physical* littleness (which is childhood), and *mental* littleness (which is humility).

One of the reasons why there are so many atheists in the world today is because there are now many people whose ego is too big.

St John Chrysostom said, humility **“is the mother, the root, the nurse, and the fulcrum of every other virtue.”**

St Teresa of Avila understood this well for she said, **“While we are on this earth nothing is more important to us than humility.”**

She held the conviction that – together with love of neighbour and detachment from all created things – humility provided an important disposition necessary for prayer. She considered that these dispositions are so necessary that without them, being a good contemplative is impossible.

Although she spoke of humility last, she identified it as **“the main practice”** as it **“embraces all others.”**

Additionally, humility induces God to dwell within us and possess us more deeply.

St Teresa explains this well: **“There’s no queen like humility for making the King to surrender.**

Humility drew the King from Heaven to the womb of the Virgin, and with it, by one hair we will draw Him to our souls.

And realise that the one who has more humility will be the one who possesses Him more; and the one who has less will possess Him less. For I cannot understand how there could be humility without love or love without humility.”

In saying that “there’s no queen like humility,” St Teresa had a chess board in mind.

The queen is the most powerful figure and without it you will most likely lose the game!

She also acknowledges that **“the pain of genuine humility doesn’t agitate or afflict the soul [as does false humility]; rather,**

“[genuine] humility expands it and enables it to serve God more.”

She knew that without this virtue we would not be able to have knowledge of ourselves in the presence of God who loves us.

She not only saw that humility allows us to see ourselves as God see us, but that it even allows us to experience the delight that God experiences in us!