

## Homily For Tuesday of the 31st Week of Ordinary Time- Year II

### St Peter's 8:30am Mass- Nov 6, 2018

**Phil 25: 5-11** "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus ... who emptied himself."

**Psalms 22** "I will praise the Lord, in the assembly of the people.."

**Luke 14:15-24** "Someone gave a great dinner ... go out and invite everyone so my house may be filled."

#### Intro

English has half a million words yet none that grasps the concept that is in this ancient Christian hymn that Paul incorporates into his letter to the Christian Church at Philippi. The Greek does have a word. It is a 'kenosis', which is God's act of self emptying, where he pours himself into our human identity. It is the ultimate humility, the definitive antidote to the tyranny of the ego.

#### What God Has Done For Us

Jesus saw his exalted position not as something to be grasped- grabbed at through greed or possessiveness. He saw his divinity not as something to be exploited, like the rulers of the earth do. His journey was one of descending to us. Christ's journey is downward, by taking on the nature of a servant or a slave. We might say that our nature is one of being a slave to our passions.

This is one of the major crazy principles of our faith. We believe that the God who created us, became his creation. What does that mean? It is that, being born in human likeness, he took on our identity. But the problem is that our identity was broken at the fall. We were made in God's image and likeness and, while our image remained intact as rational beings with an eternal soul, our likeness to God became broken. Our intellect darkened. We lost the ability to see what is true and good. And our will was weakened so that, even when we are able to discern truth and goodness by the grace of God, our wills are too weak to respond properly. So Christ entered into that brokenness, so he could heal it from the inside, to return us to the blessedness into which God invites us, like a great banquet.

## **The Invitation**

Jesus tells the story of a great banquet that none of the invitees wanted to attend. What terrible thing could have happened for so many to reject the offer. Why did they see it as a burden rather than an honour? Well, what we see in our culture is that the great gift we are being offered is not only being rejected, it is also being denied as something of no value. Not only are individuals not responding, but they are participating in preventing others from knowing or wanting to respond and go in to the banquet.

None of the excuses given for rejection of the invitation are bad in themselves: material things, like land, houses, our stuff; activities like tilling our fields and earning our livings; even our relationships. Marriage is the highest one. Marriage was, in the ancient world, a legitimate reason for avoiding military service, at least in the first year. Yet it is only a sign of the kingdom, of the banquet. It is not the banquet but its signpost.

Marriage was the basis for the first excuse for bad behaviour and, in many ways, nothing has changed. When God asked, "did you eat of the fruit I commanded you not to eat?", Adam's response was "the woman you gave me, she gave me the fruit and I ate." He blamed his wife AND God.

St Augustine reveals a key aspect of his own conversion journey. In his prayer, *Late Have I Loved You*, he describes how he searched for God in created things. "You were within and I was in the external world and sought You there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which You made. You were with me, and I was not with You. The lovely things kept me far from you, though if they did not have their existence in you, they had no existence at all." And then comes the part where he received the invitation: "You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness."

## **Whether We Will Accept the Gift and the Invitation**

The servants are the ones who take the master's invitation into the street. But in his self emptying, his kenosis, Christ is the one who became our servant. This means he is the one doing the inviting to us. The hymn in Philippians tells us how

to respond. It is through our whole being, our senses: "Every knee shall bend and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord. We kneel and reverence the tabernacle because it is his presence. We reverence the altar because it is the place where his self emptying led him. We manifest the incarnation. It is an action but also a receiving. We hear his name and speak our faith.

Who is there at the banquet? Imagine our loved ones at the feast the Lord and master has prepared. Imagine the ones the world has rejected as not having value, being invited into the Lord's banquet. Jesus is telling us that God wants that banquet to be full. In fact, it will be full. But it is an open invitation, not a test. Those who love. Those who know what is important. Those who are ready to let go of attachments, even to good things, so that we might receive, not grasp or exploit, the great banquet that has been prepared for us.