

Homily for 30<sup>th</sup> Saturday of Ordinary Time  
October 29<sup>th</sup> 2016

Philippians 1:18b–26  
Psalm 42:2–3, 5c–f  
Luke 14:1, 7–11

In today's Epistle St. Paul is aware that the end may be near for him as he awaits trial in Rome. However as he writes out his thoughts he becomes convinced that he will be given some more time so that in his words:

***I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith.***

This morning I want us to think about these two aspects of our life in Christ – that is: “our progress and joy in the faith”.

Joy in the faith is very much tied to the virtue of humility. We see this connection on this Saturday where we honour our Lady. In Luke's Gospel she declares “I am the handmaid of the Lord” and then shortly afterward sings: “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior” Her first statement is an expression of humility and her second statement is a celebration of joy.

Why are humility and joy so closely connected?

Principally because there is a spiritual dynamic at work in the soul whereby a person who is growing in the virtue of humility will experience humility's fruit, which is joy.

Jesus, in today's Gospel says as much when he tells us that those who humble themselves will be exalted.

So let's think a little more about the virtue of humility.

If we examine the word humility we find it to be derived from the Latin humus, which means earth, soil, or dirt. Humility signifies a recognition of our human origin in the dust of which Adam was made. The virtue of humility, therefore, consists in the living out of a realistic appraisal of our comparative insignificance as creatures who are totally dependent on God.

Humility, by inclining us toward the earth, recognizes our littleness, our poverty, and in its way glorifies the majesty of God ... The interior soul experiences a holy joy in annihilating itself, as it were, before God to recognize practically that He alone is great and that, in comparison with His, all human greatness is empty of truth like a lie. This self-abnegation in no way impoverishes the soul. It does not limit the legitimate aspirations of the creature. On the contrary, this virtue works to ennoble the soul, giving it wings on which to explore wider horizons.

At the very moment when God chose Our Lady to be his Mother she proclaimed herself to be his handmaiden. When Mary hears those words of praise from Elizabeth, “Blessed art thou amongst women”, she is actually beginning a time where she will put herself at the service of her cousin. Even though she is full of grace, Mary keeps the secret to herself. Not even Joseph is told of the mystery. Mary leaves it to divine Providence to find the opportune moment to enlighten him. She sings, for joy, of her wondrous blessings. She gives all the glory to God. For her part, she offers up her littleness and her entire consent. She knew nothing of her own dignity. Because of this, in her own eyes, she had not the slightest importance. She never depended on herself; she depended entirely on God, on his Will. Thus she was able to judge the extent of her own lowliness, and to understand her own helpless, but, nevertheless, secure condition as a creature: feeling herself incapable of anything and sustained only by the goodness of God. As a result of this selflessness she surrendered herself completely to God and lived solely for him. Mary never sought her own glory, never longed for the best seat at banquets. She never looked for praise on account of her divine Motherhood. She lived solely for the glory of God. Because of this she knew the interior freedom best characterized by the fruit of joy.

I read today that pride and sadness often walk hand-in-hand whereas joy is part of the patrimony of the humble soul.

St Paul’s letter to the Philippians has often been called the “Letter of Joy” – which makes sense because it is also the letter that emphasizes repeatedly the virtue of humility.

St Paul, like our Lady knew joy because as he says today:

*For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain*

May it be our prayer this day to progress in the faith by living a life of self-abandoned humility and so be fruitful in bearing a joyful countenance that celebrates God’s greatness and our human earthiness.