

“For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” With these words our Lord Jesus in today’s Gospel speaks to the heart of true love, which may be defined as selflessly seeking the authentic good of another purely for the sake of the other. Our Savior teaches us today that true love requires two things: *humility and universality*.

And not only does Christ teach us through mere words about the necessity of love possessing humility and universality, but He teaches us by *His own example*! Our Lord Jesus is called “the Way” precisely He “walks the walk!” Christ crucified on the cross for the salvation of *all humanity* is the perfect embodiment of true love and humility, not to mention God’s *universal love for every human person*!

Using the image of a wedding banquet in today’s Gospel, Jesus expresses His desire for His disciples to truly love as *He loves—to see as He sees* and *to be merciful as He is merciful*! This is what it means to follow Christ! This is what it means to share in His divinity and be holy! And not only does Christ emphasize today that we should love as

He loves but that we should also love *who He loves!* Again, the love of Christ is both humble *and* universal.

So *who* does Christ love? *Very simply, our Lord and Savior loves every single human person: past, present, and future!* If you exist, you are infinitely and perfectly loved by the Triune God! This isn't some fluffy-puffy, New Age, pop spirituality garbage! If we really dig deeper into Christ's command to love as He loves and to be merciful as He is merciful, we will find that as fallen human beings who are weak and inclined to sin, this is extremely hard!

Not only does God love *every human person*, but He loves those whom the world considers *unlovable and disposable!* God loves those whom our culture considers to be burdensome, annoying, difficult, and even threatening. In today's Gospel, our Lord Jesus explicitly embraces and singles out for love those, who in 1st century Roman Palestine, would've been considered the detestable dregs of society who are to be avoided at all costs: the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.

And so our Lord calls us to love *who He loves* and that *most especially* includes the weakest, the most vulnerable, and the most

marginalized in our society: the pre-born, the sick, the elderly, the disabled, the poor, the homeless, those struggling with addiction and mental illness, the refugee, the migrant fleeing poverty and violence, and yes, *even* criminals and the imprisoned. Not only do Christ and His Church teach us to love such human beings, but our Savior also teaches us to *love our enemies* and *to bless those who persecute and hate us!*

In today's parable, with the Lord commanding us to love such human beings who are weak, vulnerable, or marginalized, our Savior is teaching us that *true love is selfless!* True love doesn't ask, "What's in it for me?!" True love *gives and receives freely*, not demanding anything in return! If the only reason we're friends with a person is so that we can reap some material or social benefits and use them for our own selfish desires, then that's a shallow, horrible relationship and it's certainly not friendship. If our constant, subtle attitude regarding our relationships with others is: "What can I get out of this? What's in it for me?" then we're certainly not loving others—we're using others.

Christ and His Church teach us that human beings are not disposable objects that can be used and discarded at a whim. Rather, our

Catholic faith teaches us that *every* human person is created in the image and likeness of God, thereby possessing infinite dignity, value, and worth. Therefore, *every human being* is worthy of our good will.

So really, when we dig deeper into Christ's command to love our neighbor and to love as He loves, we find that such love can be extremely hard. This is why true love requires grace, which is God's help. We cannot love as Christ loves without His grace—we're simply too weak. Jesus tells us this clearly when He says, "Apart from Me you can do nothing."

This is why true love requires humility, because it demands that we selflessly depend on Christ for everything and get out of our comfort zones to love those who may have wronged us and those who may be difficult or even hateful. No doubt this is all tough stuff, but this is the stuff of the Gospel! This is the grace-filled stuff that makes human beings saints! Now please don't misunderstand me, the authentic love that Christ calls us to does not do away with truth and justice, especially when it comes to criminals and the imprisoned. Nor does such authentic

love condone the sins and crimes of others. We are called to love the sinner and reject the sin!

However, such divine, authentic love *does do away* with hatred for the person and the stubborn refusal to forgive. The greatest obstacle to true love is pride. This is why true love is rooted in humility. To truly love another person means to seek the authentic good for them—and the authentic good for others is *most especially* their conversion of heart and mind, their holiness, and their salvation.

Brothers and sisters, I have to be honest with you: ever since I became a priest three years ago, our Lord Jesus has been teaching me how to love in ways that I seriously didn't think were possible. Every day, the Lord teaches me how to love. With His grace, our merciful Savior continues to enlarge and purify my heart so that I can love as He loves and be merciful as He is merciful. Anyone who's a husband or wife, parent or grandparent probably knows what I'm talking about.

Husbands and wives, parents and grandparents, I think you would agree, that once you got married or became a mother or a father, the Lord enlarged and purified your heart so that you could love in ways that

you didn't think were possible. This is the beauty of divine love—it is elastic, boundless, and powerful! Our Lord is constantly inviting us to trust Him and surrender to Him so that He can take our hearts and sanctify them by His own Sacred Heart.

Brothers and sisters, we cannot give what we first do not possess. Therefore in order to love others, we must first *allow* ourselves to be loved by Christ. Do you truly know how much you are loved by God? We were freely created out of love, to be loved, and to love. And so in order for us to love, we must first open our hearts and minds to receive the boundless and saving love of Christ. We must humbly ask the Lord for the grace to open our hearts and minds to the love of others! Do we truly allow others to love us and care for us? Or do we shut people out in pride and stubbornness and isolate ourselves?

The virtue of humility opens the heart to authentic love. Humility enables the person to love and be loved. So as we prepare to worship and receive Love incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Most Holy Eucharist, let's beg Him for the grace of humility so that we can love and be loved. Lord, give us the humility to open our hearts to Your love

and the love of others, so that we can love as You love, especially those whom the world considers unlovable.