

FR. JOHN'S GOSPEL REFLECTION

Today is "Priesthood Sunday". We pray for our priests and bishops that the Holy Spirit continue to inspire them as they carry out the mission of Christ and to strengthen their humble service. On this "Priesthood Sunday", we will also pray for our sick especially those who will receive the Sacrament of Anointment during this Mass.

The main topic in today's Gospel is: Humility. Indeed, Jesus calls us to live a humble life (service of others) which is the opposite of a proud life (oneself service: titles and honor). To give us a better understanding of discipleship, Jesus affirms: *"The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted"* (Mt. 23: 11-12).

The word humility comes from Latin "humus" which means dirt or dust, something of no value. But we all know that from humus comes life in abundance. That is why we use humus in fertilizer. The reward of the humility is life and glory, while the price of the pride is death.

When Jesus teaches us to temper our pride and to live a life of humility it is a little confusing. He says *"Do not be called "Rabbi" or teacher and Master; call no one on earth your father."* To understand these statements they need to be examined in their historical context.

When Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, the Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and high-priests had given to themselves the privilege and the honor of being considered the "fathers" of Israel". They expected the honor, but ignored the responsibility that comes along with the title. They misused their authority for personal interest and grandeur instead of being true spiritual "fathers" who loved and cared for their spiritual children.

In addition, it was the time the Roman Empire occupied Israel and many other parts of the world. As a result, the Roman Emperor demanded that he be treated like a god and that the world should unconditionally obey him.

Jesus, true God and true man, in that confused context, had condemned the misuse of the word "father" and the abuse of fatherhood authority. Jesus did not prohibit calling our biological fathers "father", or our Spiritual fathers such as priests "father", or our instructors "Rabbi" or "teacher", or our bosses "master". "FATHERHOOD" and all that it is, comes from God the Father of all and any praise we receive for being a "father", "teacher" or "master" we return to God the Father of all.

For example, Jesus himself recognizes the biological and spiritual fatherhood when he refers to the fifth Commandment saying: "Honor your mother and father" and when he calls Abraham "Father Abraham".

I can definitely call my biological father, "father", my parish priest, "father", my instructor "teacher" and my boss, "master", but I should know he is not my GOD. A rightful place must be given to GOD the FATHER, and no one can ever replace God's role in our lives. This was the message to Jesus' original crowds. It is the message He gives to us today.

Human beings, whether father, mother or child, president or citizen, teacher or student, "grand puba" or subordinate, ordained or lay, we are equal in nature and dignity. We are all brothers and sisters. We are called to humbly serve one another as brothers and sisters for the glory of God the Father and our salvation.