

## 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C

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There is a very popular debate going around about **who is the G.O.A.T.** For the non-sports fan, the G.O.A.T is an acronym for the Greatest of All Times. This is an expression used to identify the greatest athlete of an era, sport or overall. Many argue that Michael Jordan is the GOAT, others that LeBron James or Tom Brady, Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio, Muhammad Ali, Serena Williams, Tiger Woods, Pete Sampras, Joe Montana, Dan Marino, Jerry Rice, just to name a few. The reason why it is such a debate is because it is very subjective, there is no one set of objective rules for a GOAT, yet all the attributes that we look for in the GOAT are **based on talent, skills, athleticism, and earthly related gifts. We enjoy the discussion because we strive to be great and maybe the greatest.**

**But the Lord thinks differently than us.** The book of the prophet **Isaiah** states that God's ways are not our ways and that his thoughts are not our thoughts. This is evident when the discussion of the greatest comes to play. The disciples wanted to be the greatest and approached Jesus a couple of times asking how to become the greatest. Yet Jesus always answered with what we would consider a different perspective or way of thinking; he stated that the greatest was a child, that he who was first would be last and last would be first, he even stated that he who considered himself the greatest should be a servant of all the others. His idea of being the greatest seemed to be cloudy or not up to what we would consider the greatest... **and that is precisely the point!**

**A theme that runs through today's readings is the word humility.** The book of Sirach gives us a straightforward advice, it tells us to be humble in everything that we do, and we will be loved. The acclamation of the Gospel tells us that Jesus is meek and humble of heart and that we should learn from him. Then in the Gospel he tells the story of a dinner where everyone was choosing the places of honor at the table, and he tells them not to seek the places of honor because a more distinguished person can come, and you would be asked to give your seat. He states that anyone that exalts himself will be humbled and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted. **Jesus wants us to be humble, but what exactly does that mean?...** There was a recent study done on humility and it concluded that people did not value humility, that humility is not seen as a strength but rather a weakness. Humility is seen as something that holds you back, it goes against what we feel we should be thriving for as society, yet Jesus tells us otherwise. He tells us to be humble, to learn from him; so where is the disconnect?

I think that part is because **we have the wrong definition or image of humility.** When we think of humility, **we think of people being doormats, we think of those who are taken advantaged, abused, or used by others.** A quick google search defines humility as **"a modest or low view of one's own importance"**, other dictionaries define it as the act of

being humbled, yet another defines it as **“the feeling or attitude that you have no special importance”**. I personally believe that these definitions are the reason why we see humility as a weakness rather than a strength. **Our Lord is not telling us that we are worthless, or that we are not important or that we are not special, in the contrary, we are worth so much, we are so important, we are so special, that God became one of us, that he became incarnate, that he gave his life for us. He became human so that we can share in his divinity.** Therefore, if we share in his divinity, then we can't be worthless, we can't be a doormat, we can't be of no importance... Then... what exactly did he mean by being humble, **what is humility?**

When Jesus tells us to learn from him **and to have a humble heart**, he is saying that we need to have a heart **that recognizes that we need him**. A humble heart is that heart that loves unconditionally and, in that love, it recognizes that it can't do anything without God. True humility is not ignoring or denying your gifts, talents, skills, but it is recognizing that you have gifts, talents, and skills. The difference between a humble heart and a non-humble heart, is that the humble heart recognizes that those skills and talents are gifts. **As gifts they are not earned, they were given by God, therefore you can't boast** because whatever you have, you have because it was a gift. A humble heart is that heart that is filled with gratitude, it is a heart that appreciates and values everything that it has, because it knows that it could go away. True humility is giving thanks for the many gifts, talents and skills while recognizing that they come from God and putting them to the service of the Kingdom.

The Lord tells us, that the more we humble ourselves the more that we will be exalted, the reason is because the more we humble ourselves the more that we will be like Christ. In the Gospel of John, John states **“he must increase, and I decrease”**, that is the secret to humility, that we decrease so that Christ increases in us, the more that we are like Christ, the humbler we will be. Being humble doesn't mean being a doormat, being worthless, not being special or being less than, being humble means being grateful and recognizing all the skills, talents, and gifts that the Lord has granted you and putting them to God's service. Today we argue about who is the GOAT, but we all know that Jesus is the true GOAT, so maybe we should not be aiming at **being the Greatest of All Time, but the Lesser of all time, so that if there is less of me, I can allow it to be more of him.**