

Mass & Installation of Father Callistus Onwere as Pastor of Prince of Peace Parish
Twenty-second Sunday of Ordinary Time
Homily by Bishop Felipe J. Estévez
September 1, 2013

Text: Luke 14:1, 7-14

I rejoice in giving medals to scouts as they achieve. Incentives motivate!

One feels good in recognizing peoples' achievements – it cheers them up!

It is contagious when we recognize and celebrate people who excel in sports, arts, science research, philanthropy, etc.

What is then Jesus' point in the Gospel today?

As a doctor of the soul, Jesus warns us...he puts us on alert, that there is a danger in wanting or desiring honors, the desire to be first, to be seen doing good for others, of wanting the admiration from others.

Do you remember his words on giving alms: do not seek to be seen by others to thank you, the heavenly Father sees your deeds!

Why is Jesus so concerned on this matter? There's a danger for all of us that by being aware of being singularly good you end up feeling above others...it damages the fraternity of the children of God.

Take for instance when we have certain class awareness. We might be nice and polite toward "them" but with a message: you are not part of me; you are not in my circle of friends. Humility is so related to healing this tendency. Humility relates to the Ash Wednesday liturgy for the reception of ashes: "you are dust..." everyone is told. In other words, we are all reminded: we are all together in the same boat. We are all human creatures regardless of class, education, status, looks, etc.

The Book of Wisdom says today: **Humble yourself the more, the greater you are!**

Let us remember the 50th anniversary of the march in Washington, D.C. where Dr. Martin Luther King delivered the famous speech: I have a dream. He dreamed of a society where color or race would not exclude anyone from the table of opportunities.

Today's Gospel message is: Do not ever allow that your blessings separate you from your neighbor.

Then, the Lord raises the bar to another level. You might have reached the point that you will not seek the places of honor for honor's sake, following Jesus advice: **when you are invited, go and take the lowest place.** Moreover, you will not look down on those whom you used to find as

inferior to you...Jesus invites you: **invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind**, and the ones who are **not** very important members of society. Seek the little ones out, bring them to the table – bring them near to you.

I admire the custom of my brother's family in the annual thanksgiving meal. The entire extended family is invited to a great meal. Yet each year others are invited also. One year I sat next to a single mother and her son. An international student away from his family was invited another time. An elderly widow, whose family was a thousand miles away, was invited another time.

I recently saw a video on Catholic Charities in Jacksonville done by a film maker who volunteered his remarkable talents. There was a section where students from UNF, our local state university would go to the airport to welcome the refugees, bringing them to their new homes where other volunteers arranged a new apartment with remarkable sensitivity for them. Our mantra in the church is: Welcome the immigrants. Catholic Charities is leading the way in doing it!

Jesus' dream is to make this world – that seems to be always in threat of war – a peaceful world. We need to deliver the message of reconciliation, which the Lord made possible by **the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel**. After all he is called the Prince of Peace.

As your bishop, I have come today to affirm your recently appointed second pastor. A new pastor in 43 years of existence! You have come to accept your new pastor, you are called to collaborate with him as he did say yes to shepherd you with a father's heart.