Homily for the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2026 Year A

There are times in life when we get very weary, not just our bodies, but also our souls.

In the Gospel today Christ cites two of His own personal qualities as the foundation and guarantee for man's peace of soul; they are Gentleness, and Humility.

He is quite pointed about it, learn from me, He advises, and not only learn, but imitate me as well, shoulder my yoke, and take those same qualities upon yourself.

To imitate a quality or virtual like Gentleness or Humility, we first must properly understand and appreciate them. It is only when we find something attractive or when we can love it, that we want to include it as part of our lives.

So let us look at Gentleness and Humility.

Gentleness and Humility can be easily misunderstood and can then be seen as signs of weakness.

We live in a world that puts great store upon self-confidence and self-assertiveness. We mistrust other people, their intentions, and motives. We leave nothing to chance, and we try to gain the initiative. We try to dominate them, and then from a position of strength we tried to control or manipulate the situation to our own advantage and sometimes to the advantage of other people as well.

Power and strength aren't always used for selfish motives. They are sometimes used for the good of the other person as well if they are exercised creatively. But generally, it is true to say, that if you live your life by the philosophy that might is right, that strength is everything, then there is a price that you may have to pay, you may lose your piece of soul.

You can never let your defences down, because you are cynical of the other person, and suspicious of their motives. You develop a habit of life where it is almost impossible to take a risk and trust people.

Your strength protects you from ever being hurt, though at the same time, it also protects you from ever being truly loved, for nobody gets to know the real you.

What on the surface appears to be strength, isn't really strength at all. It reflects your own insecurities and vulnerabilities, and thus you misunderstood what true Gentleness and Humility are all about.

We become laden and overburdened by our own false standards and ideals.

Gentleness and Humility, when correctly understood, are rooted in strength and are an expression of strength.

It is only the person who is very secure in themselves and who they are, that can risk showing Gentleness and Humility. Most of us are naturally gentle. We are gentle with babies, children, those who are sick, those who are elderly, and people who offer no threat to us. There is no risk involved; no risk of being exploited, rejected, or being considered stupid or hurt. But to be gentle with somebody outside of those categories is quite another thing altogether.

Gentleness has a meaning. If someone is gentle with you, the Gentleness itself is pleasing and soothing, but not only that, it is a signal that properly says many things, from, I trust you, or I care about you, or I like you, to even I love you.

The humble person is always a gentle person, and a person who can be gentle is not without some Humility as well.

From that inner strength and security that is the foundation of all Gentleness, peace of soul emanates. Life and other people are not considered as inevitable threats, because your values are rooted elsewhere. You do not have to spend most of your time and energy caught in some sort of siege mentality. By taking the risk and taking down some of your defences, you not only can express love, but you can open yourself up to receive love as well.

So far I have been talking about Gentleness and Humility as natural and desirable characteristics in any civilised person. They were found in the person of Christ, but they are more than that, they have a deeper theological meaning, and it is this that Christ wishes us to learn from and imitate.

God in Himself must contain the most staggering combination and balance between strength and Gentleness.

Consider, if you can, the unimaginable power and strength that underlines the whole act of creation. Countless galaxies, planets, suns, and stars all moving at inconceivable speeds through the infinite distances of empty space, away from perhaps that one primal explosion that marked beginning of all time.

The all-powerful Creator whose His will planned, started, and sustains all those activities, is the same gentle Creator whose delicacy designed the intricacy of a snowflake, the wonder of microscopic and subatomic life.

From out of that enormous, inconceivable power and strength, we have the Gentleness of God becoming man. He emptied Himself of His divinity and put on the fragile and vulnerable robe of humanity. He risked and endured want, need, pain, torture and even the barbaric death on a cross.

In the person of Christ, God made man, the Gentleness that flows from God's strength was expressed as Humility, Christ humbling himself even to death on the cross. Yet in this humble and gentle Christ there still existed strength and power. Even the winds and the seas obeyed him. He raised people from the dead.

But, by Christ standards, strength is made manifest in weakness, in a certain voluntary powerlessness. He chose the weak to confound the wise and the strong. He says to us and to those of us who will follow him, learn from me, and imitate me, be gentle and humble in heart.

Now why would Christ, who possessed infinite power, give higher value to Gentleness and Humility instead? The answer is simple. The price that you pay to be powerful, and the price that others must pay as a result of your power, is just not worth it.

The whole cycle, or package deal, involved in first getting power, then exercising it, and then keeping it, at whatever level, inevitably results in a terrible loss of peace of soul. We tire ourselves out and over burden ourselves with the weight that we need not carry. The hard lesson that we are often so slow and unwilling to learn, is that if we take our faith seriously, and if we try to live like Christ, there is an enormous risk involved. It can quite literally mean turning one's whole world upon its head, and living by standards and values that the world despises and rejects.

Gentleness and Humility are not self-assertiveness or a desperate clinging to life itself and certain worldly values. The Christian is the one who is supposed to be prepared to even lay down his life for his fellow man.

If you really believe and if your strength is in Christ, then you can never really lose, everything is gain.

How many of us have lost that quality of strength that enabled the martyrs of the early church, and even of today, to face with Gentleness and Humility the brutal and incomprehensible power that was to take their lives away.

Down through the centuries there have always been Christians who have borne witness to Christ's values. But there have also been Christians, and even the Church itself who have not, putting power and strength over Gentleness and Humility, often for the best of intentions, but that is not the way of Christ.

In recent years the Church has been rediscovering the basis of that real strength, by focusing her manpower, her resources, and her voice upon the poor and the oppressed against worldly power and injustice.

To really live and believe in Christ’s values, is to experience liberation. It is to be really freed from the burdens that we mistakenly place upon ourselves to establish our safety and security.

Christ’s followers can risk being gentle and humble because they are rooted in the power and strength of Christ Himself. It is His promise and assurance that it is only there that we can find true peace for our souls.