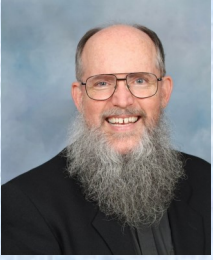


Homily Rerun: August 28, 2016 ~ Fr. Bill



Last week I told you that I had cancer. This week I am happy to tell you that, after a biopsy, the doctor is 95% sure that I do not have cancer. So: Did God's love for me, activated and released in my life by your love for me as expressed in your prayers, heal me of cancer? Maybe! Or: Did God's love for me, activated and released in my life by your love for me as expressed in your prayers, prevent the development of cancer? Maybe! Either way, the credit and thansgiving goes to God – and to you. It is profoundly humbling, in the most elevated and enriching way, to realize (as more than to know and/or to believe in) the presence and power of God's protective love for me incarnated through your love for me.

This leads us to today's Scriptures on the topic of humility. Humility often gets a bad rap. The reality is that humility is one of the keys for unlocking a treasure chest full of joy in our lives. Democratic senator, Fritz Hollings, a flamboyant orator from South Carolina, said he once flunked a polygraph test when he started a sentence with "In my humble opinion." One of the first joys of humility is the ability to laugh at oneself.

A refrain which we often pray in song is "Taste and see that the Lord is good." In a world overflowing with the good blessings of God's love it is easy for the many 'tastes' of God's goodness to run together and get lost in the process. Another joy of humility is that it cleanses the palate so that we can 'taste and see that the Lord is good' over and over again without losing the clarity of each 'taste.'

The constant awareness of the goodness of God necessitates a constant awareness of God's presence. This brings about the awareness that God is watching you – all the time. For the proud this is scary; for the humble it is sheer joy. God is not watching you to see you make a mistake. He is not watching you to see if you step out of line. He is not watching you to see if you need to be put in your place. God put you in your place when He created you in His own image and likeness. He put you in your place when He adopted you as His own beloved daughter or son. He put you in your place when He gave you eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven as your inheritance. You can of course throw away that inheritance but that would not change the fact that it is yours. The truth is that God has put you in your place – and it is a great, wonderful and beautiful place to be.

God is watching you all the time because He enjoys doing so. He is watching you because your place in life, your place in creation is to give Him the joy of watching you. Pride makes you fearful that God is watching. Humility allows you to be the little child calling out, "Mommy, Daddy, watch this."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us: "Pride is undue self-esteem or self-love, which seeks attention and honor and **sets oneself in competition with God.**" (CCC #1866) and: "[humility] The **virtue by which a Christian acknowledges that God is the author of all good.** Humility avoids inordinate ambition or pride, and provides the foundation for turning to God in prayer." (CCC #2559).

If you set yourself up in competition with God, guess who is going to lose. Pride sets a self-defeating spiral of despair in which you try to overcome your status as a loser by choosing a competition which you have absolutely no chance of winning, a competition which, by the way, God totally rejects. In sharp contrast to this, humility celebrates all that is good as a gift from God, a gift of God's love. True humility is at the heart of the joy for which and in which we were made. Sinful pride is at the heart of the suffering and misery into which original sin cast the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve.

The original sin is based on the original lie which is intimately connected with the original pride. God revealed to us that He made us in His image and likeness. The original temptation, i.e. "If you eat this you will become like God," presumed the original lie, i.e. "You are not like God," and paved the way for the original pride, i.e. competition with God for who will make the rules, for who is 'the boss.'

The corrective, or remedy, for all this is truth, i.e. humility. Humility is truth. St. Margaret Mary Alacoque said that we should speak of God with praise, our neighbor with respect, and ourselves neither well nor ill nor at all. In the original truth, i.e. "you are made in God's image and likeness," offering praise to God and showing respect for our neighbor is all that needs to be said. You are made in the image and likeness of God; you are in His hands. There is no need to lift yourself up nor even to be concerned about yourself.

Humility is embracing the truth that God has me. In one of the Superman movies as Lois Lane is plunging to her death Superman swoops in, catches her and says something like, "Don't worry, ma'am. I've got you." To which Lois responds "But who's got you?"

God has me (us):

- ♥ with or without cancer
- ♥ in life and in death
- ♥ in better and in worse

This is THE TRUTH. This is HUMILITY.

God is watching you just because He enjoys doing so, and because your place in creation is to give Him the joy of watching you. The moment you embrace this fully and unconditionally, you will have unlocked a treasure chest of joy in your life and you will have the key for doing this over and over again.