

## **The Humility of Christ** (26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

### **Philippians 2:1-11—The Humility of Christ**

<sup>1</sup> So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of *the same mind*, having *the same love*, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> *Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves.* <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> *Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus,* <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in *the form of God*, did not count *equality with God* a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> *but emptied himself*, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> *And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.* <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has *highly exalted him* and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:1-11)

### **The Humility of Christ**

1. Do Everything “in Humility” (Greek *tapeinophrosynē*) (2:3)
  - a. Count others better than yourselves
  - b. Do not look out for your own interests only
  - c. Look out for the interests of others
2. Have the “Mind” of Christ:

#### *Disciples of Jesus*

1. Do Everything “in Humility” (Greek *tapeinophrosynē*)

2. “Regard” others as better than you (Greek *hēgeomai*)

#### *Jesus Christ*

1. Jesus “Humbles” himself (Greek *tapeinaō*)

2. Did not “Regard” His Equality with God (Greek *hēgeomai*) something to be “grasped”

### **The Self-Emptying (Greek *Kenōsis*) of Christ**

1. Christ was in the “form (Greek *morphē*) of God” (2:5)
  - a. *morphē* = “outward appearance” (Mark 16:12, Christ in “another form”)
2. Did not regard “the equality (*isa*) with God” (2:6)
  - a. Synonymous with “in the form of God”: affirmation of his Divinity
  - b. Jesus Makes Himself “Equal (Greek *ison*) with God” (John 5:18)
3. Something to be “Grasped” (Greek *harpagmon*) (2:6)
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup> Option: To exploit something *already* possessed
  - b. 2<sup>nd</sup> Option: To seize something *not yet* possessed

## The Mass Readings Explained

- c. Traditional Interpretation: reference to the Incarnation
  - d. NRSV: “Did not regard equality with God something to be exploited”
4. He “Emptied Himself” (Greek *kenōsis*) in the Incarnation (2:7)
- a. *Does not mean Jesus’ ‘emptied himself’ of his divinity*
  - b. Takes the form of a servant = human form
  - c. Born in the “likeness” (Greek *homoīōtati*) of men = the Incarnation
  - d. Cf. Rom 8:3: “In the likeness (Greek *homoīōtati*) of sinful flesh

### The Exaltation of Christ in the Resurrection and Ascension

1. Therefore God “Greatly Exalted” (Greek *hyperypsoō*) Jesus (2:9)
  - a. Bestowed on him “the name above every name”
  - b. That at the name of Jesus “every knee should bow” and “every tongue confess”
  - c. That Jesus Christ is “Lord” (Greek *kyrios*) to the glory of God the Father
2. Paul Alludes to One of the Most Monotheistic Passages in the Old Testament!

<sup>18</sup> For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens... “*I am the LORD, and there is no other...*” <sup>21</sup>*There is no other god besides me...* <sup>23</sup> By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘*To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.*’ (Isaiah 45:18, 21, 23)

### The Living Tradition on the *Kenōsis* of Christ

John Chrysostom: He was not only human, which is what he appeared to be, but also God... We are soul and body, but he is God, soul, and body. For this reasons Paul says *in the form*—and so that when you hear of his emptying you may not suppose that he underwent change, degradation, and some sort of annihilation of his divinity. But remaining what he was he assumed what he was not. Becoming flesh, he remained the Word of God. (John Chrysostom, *Homily on Philipians* 8.2.5-11, quoted in ACCS 8:248).

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection (26<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. What, for Paul, is the essence of Christian “humility”? How is it modeled on the humility of Christ?

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## For Further Reading

1. Mark J. Edwards, ed. *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians* (Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VIII; Downers Grove, IL.: IVP, 1999).
2. Brant Pitre, Michael P. Barber, and John A. Kincaid, *Paul: A New Covenant Jew: Rethinking Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2018). See pp. 95-128 for a full discussion of the divinity of Christ in Paul, with a specific focus on the Kenosis hymn in Philippians 2.