

Pastoral Reflection for Sept. 26-27 by Cathy Hartrich

Philippians 2:1-11

Of the readings today I am most drawn to Paul's letter to the Philippians. Compared to the first reading, "The Lord's way is not fair!" (from Ezekiel) and the parable in Matthew's gospel of the two farmer's sons, this letter is straightforward, graciously sentimental and hopeful. Paul is calling the community of Philippi to be humble, united in spirit, and selfless, "regarding others as more important than yourselves." A real lesson for us!

Paul's instruction in how to achieve this virtuousness is seemingly simple. He says to the Church:

"Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

I say "seemingly simple" because it's really incredibly hard on our bloated egos to consistently put others above ourselves. Too often we think of ourselves as too important to do those little random acts of kindness toward our brethren and to others *beyond* our community. To empty ourselves, like Jesus, taking on the form of a slave. And finally being obedient to the point of death... that's really dying to ourselves. Truly counter-cultural!

But Paul urges us to do it anyway.

Like Fr. Greg's homily a couple of weeks ago: We will "rub against each other" as we do forgiveness "seventy X seven X seventy." And we will learn over time, as we grow towards perfection. Not that we will ever become perfect... just better... and better.

Or as Dorothy Day put it, "little by little."