

## Trinity 3

I take as my text today from St. Peter's First General Epistle:

All of you be subject one to another, and clothed with humility....

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in Thy Sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.”

On Thursday, we celebrated the Feast of St. Peter, chief, or first among the Apostles, a rock of faith strengthening the other Apostles and Disciples of our Lord as they began to fulfill Christ's charge to go out into the world to preach and teach, to baptize and to spread the good news, the Gospel of our Lord.

As followers of Christ, those Apostles and early Disciples of our Lord would be called Christians, and in His Name, they would change the world.

Our Epistle reading today comes from Peter's First Epistle General. A **General Epistle** is a letter that is not addressed to a specific church or congregation but to those scattered abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, perhaps beyond.

Probably written in Rome near the time he was martyred, about the year 67, this letter of Peter's was never in doubt as to authorship until recent times, and for most, there continues to be no doubt that Peter himself was the author.

What is striking about this First Epistle General of St. Peter is that the theology it expresses is exactly that of the early Church and it touches on the preaching points of those early preachers.

There are five points:

1. The messianic age has begun, and the elect are summoned to join the new order.
2. This new order, or new age, has come through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

3. The resurrected Christ, Jesus, has been exalted to the right hand of God, where He is the head of the new Israel.
4. The messianic age will soon be fulfilled with the return of Jesus Christ in glory to judge the living and the dead.
5. As a result, people are called to repentance with the offer of forgiveness, the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of eternal life.

These were the building blocks of the first evangelists and permeate the First Epistle of St. Peter.

Those to whom Peter is writing are called the elect, God's chosen people, those who have accepted the Grace of God. These Chosen of God were soon to be called Christians, that is to say, followers of Christ, and they would be the ones set aside from the world, just as the Jews had been.

Christians would be characterized by a rebirth; they would be reborn to a new life through the Will of God and the work of the Holy Spirit.

There are many traits that help to characterize a Christian, but there is one trait that is all encompassing. It is humility.

St. Peter specifically addresses humility in the passage we read today.

He tells us to clothe ourselves in the garment of humility. For garment, Peter uses a word in Greek that refers to two kinds of garments: first, a protective clothing tied on, such as an apron; indeed, it is such a garment that Jesus put on when He washed His Disciples feet. Jesus girded Himself with a towel that formed an apron, a sign of humility.

Secondly, it can also refer to a stole-like garment, long and flowing, signifying honour and prestige.

If taken to its conclusion, we find that this apron, this humble garment, when donned in our Lord's service and in service to others, can become for us, through quiet humility and selflessness, a garment of honour before God.

It follows, then, that when we are clothed in humility, engaged in God's service to our fellow human beings, we take on a Christian trait that is fulfilling in itself other Christian traits.

Humility is built upon love, sacrifice, and service. It is not something we can strive to be, or will ourselves to be.

It is something we become as a result of God's Grace working within us, the fruition of that Divine Gift which we freely accept.

Humility is not something we recognize in ourselves, it is what others recognize in us.

Humility is not self-abasement; rather, it is the giving of self to the benefit of others.

It is not to be misconstrued as a weakness, being namby-pamby, rolling over, or letting people walk over us.

Perhaps, humility can be described as bringing out the best in others; our Lord certainly did that.

As Peter continues the passage, he points out that there are certain laws of the Christian Life, humility, of course, being the first, for it may be found in the others.

There is Christian serenity, where we turn our anxieties, cares, worries, burdens, over to our Lord, knowing that God always works for good for those who love him

There is the duality of Christian effort and vigilance, meaning that we do have a responsibility for our lives and well-being; we are not to sit back and do nothing. And, we are expected to be vigilant or watchful for we live in a world fraught with spiritual dangers.

It boils down to a matter of living our lives for Christ, or, to put it another way, living our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

There is also steadfastness, being able to resist evil and temptation.

And there is Christian suffering; indeed, in our world, suffering is inevitable; it can make us better, or it can destroy us.

Suffering can be restorative; it can solidify our character; strengthen us; and it can uncover for us the bedrock of faith.

Yet, it is still humility that is the defining trait and first among the laws of the Christian Life outlined by St. Peter.

As our Lord humbled Himself to become one of us through the Miracle of the Incarnation, so we humble ourselves before Him in love.

In the spirit of humility and with a contrite heart, so may we be acceptable to God as we offer ourselves, our souls and bodies, as living sacrifices.

Our humility comes from Christ's humility; our love in response to the Divine Love of God that passes all understanding.

Humility is not what we see in ourselves, but what others see in us, exposed by a living faith, selfless service, and a true love of God and all his creation.