

Homily  
Memorial of Saint Bonaventure,  
Bishop & Doctor of the Church  
Monday, July 15, 2024

God always comes first. This is the foundation of our faith. First, God created us. The First and greatest commandment; we are to love God, with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. First, we see Christ in one another. In this way, we push the pride of self away and we humbly make others our focus as we serve one another.

I believe this is the message of today's Gospel. We are to call no man rabbi, teacher, father, master. Rather, we put God first. We have only one, our God, who is the first in all things. And we are all a reflection of that perfect reality. We all are an imperfect image of our perfect Rabbi, Teacher, Father, Master. We strive to be Christ for one another, as best we can, as failed as we are.

Those of us who are called to lead, lead best when we reflect the greatest leader, our God, and serve, as He leads us and serves us. It is when we think ourselves better or more knowledgeable that we trip up and lead others astray. It is in our pride that we fail. It is in our humility that we best reflect our perfect God.

St. Bonaventure is a great example of this. Bonaventure was born around 1218. He became a Franciscan and studied philosophy and theology at the University of Paris. He became a famous teacher and philosopher, part of the extraordinary intellectual flowering of the 13th century. He was a friend and colleague of St Thomas Aquinas, who said, "When we call him "Our Father," we are not saying that God is like a human father, but rather that human fathers are like God."

Bonaventure defended the Franciscan Order and, later ruled it with wisdom and prudence after he was elected general of the order. In his humility, he declined the archbishopric of York in 1265 but was later made cardinal bishop of Albano. He was instrumental in the brief reconciliation of the Greek and Latin churches at the Council of Lyons before dying a year later. Bonaventure wrote extensively on philosophy and theology; he always insisted that the simple and uneducated could have a clearer knowledge of God than the wise. He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1588 by Pope Sixtus V.

His wisdom, love of the Church and humility are great examples for us to follow as we all strive to be better reflections of Christ in the world. As we come forward to receive Christ, may we open ourselves to His love, mercy, guidance and humility so that He may live in us and us in Him into eternity.