

Homily
Memorial of St. Eusebius of Vercelli, bishop
Friday of the 17th Week in OT
August 2, 2024

Humility is the hardest virtue to embrace. It is the absence of arrogance or pride. It requires us to be modest, teachable, empathetic, grateful, respectful, and most importantly, self-aware. Jesus is humble. Jesus is obedient to His Father. Jesus is a servant to all of us. He subordinates Himself to us by His sacrifice, soon made present on this altar. He knows Who He is and takes His place accordingly, at the right hand of His Father.

C.S. Lewis said, “According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere flea bites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil.” If this sounds like exaggeration, it will help us to know that Lewis is not simply giving us his private opinion but summarizing the thinking of great saints through the ages. Augustine and Aquinas both taught that pride was the root of sin. Ironically, even Calvin, Luther, and other ‘reformists’ believed so. Make no mistake about it: pride is The Great Sin. It is the devil’s most effective and destructive tool.

A priest named Arius from Alexandria was prideful, specifically arrogant and unteachable. He began to propagate a theological position that later became known as the Arian Heresy. He taught that the Son of God was not co-eternal with the Father and was inferior to Him.

St. Eusebius of Vercelli was humble. He knew his place. He was holy and passionate about his faith. He devotedly shepherded to his flock and evangelized the pagans in his community. He lived among his clergy, endearing him to them through fraternity, fostering spiritual growth and accountability.

St. Eusebius was one among many bishops exiled during that tumultuous time. Upon his return, he staunchly defended the faith against Arianism and fought bravely to promote the true nature of Christ. He is known as a ‘confessor,’ one who suffered for his faith, but was not martyred.

In our first reading, John tells us it is through love that we are able to keep God’s commandments, that through love, our burden is light, and love leads us to faith and belief in the Son of God. Love conquers all. It is through love that we find humility. Jesus tells us that the meek will inherit the land. This means that, through humility, peace will prevail on earth.

It takes great strength to be humble. It takes great humility to love unconditionally, as God loves us. And that takes practice. Every day we have a new opportunity to practice love. Every day, we have a new opportunity to reflect on our failings, seek forgiveness, accept God’s grace and start over. It is through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist which we are about to receive, and Reconciliation which we need to realize God’s mercy, that we can continue on our path towards God until we see Him face to Face and hear those glorious words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”