

Homily. 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. C. 27/28 August 2022.

We know quite a lot about Jesus. In fact from various sources we know much more about Him than we do about most other historical persons. We know when and where He lived, worked, travelled and died. We know about His parents and family. We know about His profound influence on others and what happened to Him and His followers after He died.

We also know that He was an brilliant story teller and respected teacher, preacher and healer. We know that He had followers who were captivated by His wisdom, warmth, compassion, generosity and integrity. We know that He was capable of being both truthful and merciful, both passionate for justice and angry when He encountered injustice. We know that He had friends, that He enjoyed visiting them, that He liked meals and company and that He was prayerful and committed to God, His faith and serving God's people. We even know that could be hopeful, joyful, afraid and anxious and that He could weep over sadness and loss.

Strangely though, we aren't told by any text or witness that He could laugh, but He must have because He was fully human and humans laugh. What's more, He must have had a happy, positive nature because He called His message and teaching the Good-news. People were attracted to Him and few indeed are drawn to follow and commit their lives to sour pusses. He was humble too, emptying Himself out for others, for all of us, and only people with a sense of humour are free to be genuinely humble.

On the other hand the Pharisees never come across as having a sense of proportion. They're too caught up in their own personal project of power and prestige for humour and laughter. The gospel story of Jesus out for a meal at the house of a leading influential Pharisee has them anxiously waiting and watching just so that they could catch Him out saying or doing something that they disapproved. Even on God's Sabbath day of rest and celebration with a special guest invited they had their guard up looking for errors and missteps. Lacking any sense of humour about themselves and the many everyday absurdities of life the Pharisees always come across as proud and arrogant, chock full of their own self importance.

All of us are working on deepening our humility, building this on an honest appraisal of ourselves, with good humour helping us accept our many limits and foibles. I'm not talking here about becoming like a class clown who thinks that everything is a joke and nothing really matters. However, what we do want to avoid is the Pharisee's trap where everything matters so very much that there's no fun, joy or balance in our character or lives.

It's Jesus of Nazareth as He was known in His day that we're seeking to be like, God's man who smiled, laughed, celebrated living, enjoyed others company and God's gifts, a genuine and humble man. We want to be more like this man of the soil and earth, of humility with humour because He has saved us by freely and lovingly giving Himself away for us. He's our Lord, calling us now to follow in His footsteps so that we can better resemble Him on our journey towards the joy of the heavenly Jerusalem, our true home and the happy feast of life that never ends.