

AUGUST 31, 2025, FATHER VIJAI AMIRTHARAJ

A number of years ago, a story was reported in Sydney Daily Herald and it concerned a man on a plane in an economy class. He objected to sitting next to a woman of color. Since the economy class section was full, the man demanded that the flight attendant check to see if there was an open seat in the business class section.

The flight attendant came back smiling and said, “There is a seat in the business class.” And as the man unbuckled his seatbelt to move to the more expensive section of the plane, the attendant said to the woman of color, “Madame, please follow me, and I’ll take you to your new seat in business class.”

Sisters and brothers, our readings today remind us that we are called to be humble people. But what does it mean to be humble? Does it mean to put ourselves down? Does it mean to think little of ourselves? Not at all.

In its most profound and most beautiful sense, humility means to be like Jesus, who humbled himself to the point of washing the feet of his followers, his disciples. Humility means to be like Jesus, who calls us to embrace the attitude of seeking the lowest places at table for the sake of others.

A while ago, I came across a beautiful picture of Pope Francis asking for a blessing from a newly ordained priest, which was an example of humility. In our first reading today, the prophet Sirach says, “The greater you are, the more you must humble yourself.”

Now, you and I know very well that this saying is counter-cultural in our society of today. Most commonly, the greater one becomes, the more aggressive one becomes. Sisters and brothers, today we live in a society that is founded on ambition, on aggression, on assertiveness. We hear

people say commonly, “Go for it”—and don’t worry about the consequences.

In this kind of society, the call for self-sacrifice, for gentleness, for true concern for others, especially those who are non-influential, may seem unrealistic and unattainable. Signs of pride are all around us. Sometimes it is within us. Pride of place, be it in our church or out in the state, at work, or at home, are jealously guarded by some people.

And being part of such a society, we can very easily be driven in the wrong direction. Therefore, our scripture reading on this 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time reminds us that we share with every human being the dignity of being created in the image and likeness of God, and that we, as people created in the image of God, are called to be humble like our Lord Jesus.

And so, as we come together to celebrate this Eucharist, let us pray for humility, and let us always keep the words of Sirach in mind: Great is the might of the Lord, but by the humble, he is glorified.

Amen.