

# 14th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Cycle A

July 3, 2011

St. Margaret Parish, Bel Air

## Aesop's Fable

Seven hundred years before Jesus' birth, there lived a Greek slave named Aesop.

This man compiled a collection of stories known as *Aesop's Fables*. These stories contain wonderful lessons for living.

One of *Aesop's Fables* tells of a dispute between the sun and the wind about which of them was stronger. The story goes that one day a man dressed in a coat was walking down a country road.

The sun said to the wind, "*Whoever makes that man remove his coat first will be the stronger and the winner.*" The wind agreed to participate in the contest and also agreed to go first.

And so, the wind blew and blew, but the more the wind blew, the tighter the man held on to his coat. Finally, the wind gave up.

Then it was the sun's turn and she began to shine in all her glory. Within minutes, the man took off his coat.

The sun won the contest and was declared stronger than the wind. The moral of Aesop's fable is: You can achieve more by gentleness than by force.

## Jesus' Humbleness

Aesop's moral is one of the lessons that Jesus is teaching today.

Jesus says: "*Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.*" It strikes me that the foundational trait here is humbleness.

Humbleness is basic to Jesus' identity – so basic that we may easily overlook it. We believe that in Jesus, the Son of God has taken on our humanity and become one of us.

Jesus embraces our humanity with all of its limitations and weaknesses and struggles and infirmities. In his humbleness, he meets us where we are and it is this humbleness that makes it possible for him to be gentle with us.

Jesus' compassion and sensitivity and understanding flow from his being completely one with us. Instead of being forceful like the wind, Jesus is gentle like the warm sun.

## Jesus' Gentleness

For example, when Jesus is forming a group of followers, he respects these individuals and their life situation and their freedom. He simply invites them and never tries to force them.

In another situation, Jesus refuses to put down and condemn a woman caught in adultery. He respects her as a person – sin and all – and just exhorts her to avoid that behavior.

And again, Jesus likens himself to a shepherd who searches for the one lost sheep. He does not beat or scold the sheep, but rejoices in finding it and carries it back home.

In these and so many other ways, Jesus shows himself exactly as he describes himself today. *“I am gentle and humble of heart.”*

### ***“Learn from Me”***

Now we must remember that Jesus says: *“Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.”*

Jesus wants us to *“learn from him.”* The idea is that we also are to cultivate the traits of humbleness and gentleness.

Humbleness means that we have to stay in touch with our humanity. We have to remain aware of our own limitations and weaknesses and struggles.

The result is that sometimes we need to recall the ole adage: *“There but for the grace of God go I.”* And, as our Native Americans say: *“We have to walk in another’s moccasins to understand them.”*

This is the attitude of Jesus, his humbleness. And from this will flow a strong gentleness.

For example, toward those who are different from us, those who are of a different race or ethnic group or socio/economic group or political persuasion – only the gentleness of allowing diversity will prevent or reduce division.

Or toward those living with addictions to drugs or alcohol or living a lifestyle that we do not think is right – only the gentleness of patient care will lead them to look at alternatives.

Or toward those who left our Church to embrace another faith practice or no faith practice at all – only the gentleness of respectful invitation may lead them to consider once again the richness of our Catholic tradition.

### **Conclusion**

So, maybe Aesop’s fable of the wind and the sun will help us to recall Jesus’ lesson today.

*“Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.”* Jesus’ humbleness and gentleness will be our real strength and make us the really strong person in life.