

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, August 8, 2021
19th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle B

The Olympics have a Latin motto that says: Citius, Altius, Fortius – Faster, Higher, Stronger. Basically, that's what the Olympics is all about: the competition to be the fastest, the highest, the strongest. But we know that fierce competition does not only reign in and during the Olympics. We witness it every day – we even take part in it, sometimes even to the extreme. That is because we live in a highly competitive society. Everybody seems to be caught up with this competition; everybody seems to be striving to move upward. Practically everybody wants to “go up” and be “above others”.

Jean Vanier, a spiritual director and writer, says, “Everything in our society is telling us to go up the ladder – all the way up”. Then he follows this up with a striking question: “But who is going to help us walk down the ladder?” When we go up, naturally we leave people under – in fact, we might be stepping on some of them just for us to stay on top. When we are up there it is extremely difficult for us to see those below as they really are, they look small and too far away. And because we are up high our posture when we look at them is downward – giving us a wrong sense of power and superiority – people look up at us. This can also lead us to consider ourselves to be “higher” and to having “more dignity” than those below us.

But when we go down to be equal with others, it is easier to relate with them. We can easily look into one another's eyes. When we are on the same level with them, we can see their situation, we can hear their sighs, we can feel what they feel. Going down to the level of other people is actually a posture of someone who is giving up power. It is a step of someone trying to be in solidarity or to be in communion with his or her neighbor, if someone who is serving rather than being served.

Needless to say, that this attitude of “going down” is very much against the prevailing culture or mentality of our highly competitive society. In a society in which upward mobility, going up the ladder is the norm, downward mobility or descending way is not only discouraged but even considered unwise, unhealthy, or downright stupid. What we are referring to here is

not just a posture or an act, but rather, a way of life. And this is the way of life embraced by Christ: "I am the bread that came down from heaven". Jesus did not remain up there on high to be "on top" of people. Rather, he came down from heaven to be the bread of life. He took flesh and became human like us in everything but sin. He came down to be with us, to be among us. Thus, he became food for the so many human hungers; food for those who hunger for love and compassion, food for those who hunger for truth, peace and justice.

There is an urgent need for people who would bring the bread of life, as Jesus did. And this is our responsibility and mission as followers of Christ. But we will only be able to do this if we are willing to go down the ladder. We have to go down from our position of power and superiority to being humble servants of God and his people. This is the way of downward mobility of Jesus.

Amen