

**Homily for Tuesday of the Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time
Mass with the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

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Reverend Fathers and Deacon[s],
Dear Knights and Ladies,
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The prophet Ezekiel lived what we might call - with some sense of understatement - an uncomfortable life. He received many difficult appointments from the Lord, including the one of which we heard tonight. The Lord God sent him to say to the Prince of Tyre, "Because you are haughty of heart, you say, "A god am I!..." And yet you are a man, and not a god, however you may think yourself like a god" (Ezekiel 28:2). To be certain, princes are not the only ones who think so highly of themselves. Many people in our society today think quite highly of themselves, even if they do not say so explicitly; perhaps that includes even some among us here tonight!

As we hear these words and the command to speak them, we ought to consider if you we are willing to speak these same words to those who think too highly of themselves. If Ezekiel were to walk

through our streets today, to how many of us might he rightly direct these words?

The temptation to seek to place ourselves at the center of attention can be strong. What, then, is the remedy to this temptation? How are we think rightly of ourselves so that we might not be “a people devoid of reason,” but be saved (Deuteronomy 32:28)? The remedy is to keep the needle of which Jesus speaks ever before us (cf. Matthew 19:24).

A commentary on the Gospel of Matthew offers these words:

The needle is the Word of God, which is the Son of God himself. The tip of the needle is sharp and subtle: subtle according to his divinity and sharp as to his incarnation. The needle is straight and without curve, that is, without scruple. Through the wound of his Passion the Gentiles now have entered eternal life. Only this needle, the cross, can stitch wounds together. He sewed together once again the tunic of immortality, which had been torn by Adam. It is the needle that sewed the flesh to the spirit. This needle joined together the Jewish people and that of the Gentiles; the apostle says of it, “For he is our peace, who has made us both one” (Ephesians 2:14). This is the needle that joined the broken friendship of angels and human beings. This is the needle that pierces and passes through but does not wound.¹

Indeed, how hard it is to pass through the Cross! How hard it is to acknowledge our sins, to confess the many times and ways we have failed to love both God and neighbor, and to allow our own hearts to be pierced with this needle as we pass through it. We fear being wounded

and so we seek overlook our sins and think ourselves greater than we are.

The great lover of the Cross, Saint Francis of Assisi, opened himself in an extraordinary way to be pierced by the needle of Christ and passed through it into glory. Saint Francis was well aware of his own failings and never shied away from them. Because he spent so much time contemplating the mystery of the Lord's Cross, he repeatedly said, "What a man is in the eyes of God, that he is and nothing more."² If we, dear brothers and sisters, keep the Cross always before us and seek to conform our lives to the mystery of love expressed upon it, then we will have "heaped up riches for [ourselves]" from the poverty of Christ (Ezekiel 28:5; cf. II Corinthians 8:9).

In particular, for those of us who are Knights and Ladies of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, we should have a special devotion to the cross, the instrument that led to His burial in that earthly tomb in the Holy Land, from which He rose from the dead, but also the trophy of victory that conquered sin and death and that leads us to our eternal salvation.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ PG 56:812.

² In Saint Bonaventure, *The Life of St. Francis*, VI.1. In Ewert Cousins, trans., *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1978), 229.