

The reading from Paul's Letter to the Philippians especially verses 6-11 has been etched in my brain since the early 1980's when my Soteriology professor asked my Theology class to memorize it. The text reveals the reason why God wanted to be one like us. Christ was not concerned about equality with God. Instead, "he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness." That tells us how special being human is. It also means that to be divine is to be humble. Furthermore, God in human form has nothing to do with power and control. It has all to do with God loving us and desiring to help us return to the Father. This is the first challenge of these readings – to be humble, not exerting any power or control.

The second challenge comes from the same quote above focusing on the words "emptied" and "slave". As members of the Body of Christ, we are asked to cater to the well-being of the powerless and people who are "emptied" – the poor. We are reminded to show compassion and solidarity with those who are driven to their knees due to lost of jobs, income and worst of all, life caused by the pandemic.

In today's world, there is much hypocrisy. But let us not be quick to judge. An honest look within will show our tendency to be hypocritical like the second son in today's parable. This can make us feel discouraged. Yet, discouragement never comes from God. He is all-powerful, all-loving, all-knowing, and all-merciful. And since he is on our side - as the crucifix proves to us - everything is possible for us; nothing is out of our reach. The third challenge is to turn to Christ and the church. For on our own, we cannot do Christ's mission here and now.