



Bringing Home the Word

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 23, 2016

True Holiness Is Humble

By Janel Esker

In college I found a store that sold children’s award ribbons with messages like “I try hard,” “#1 Speller,” and “I’m Potty-Trained!” They’re cute for children, but I thought they would be especially funny for adults. I bought a bunch to give as quirky birthday gifts. Fortunately, my friends put them on their bulletin boards instead of wearing them on their shirts.

The Pharisee in today’s Gospel might as well be wearing an award ribbon; while praying, he proudly conveys that he is “Most Righteous” and “#1 Holy Person.” On the surface, he’s correct—he has lived a worthy life, and the tax

collector has clearly committed more sins. However, Jesus upholds the humble tax collector as the one God favors. Jesus’ audience would have been shocked at this reversal because he usually reserves his harshest criticism for the self-important. It’s one thing to live a good life; it’s another to forget that God is the source of that goodness.

We may not wear spiritual award ribbons on our chests, but do we wear them in our hearts? Do they say things like, “Wears Appropriate Clothing to Church” (not like that girl with the too-short skirt) or “Stays Until the End of Mass” (not like those cheaters who skip out after Communion)? Sometimes our attempts at holiness can lead us to denigrate others—which is exactly the opposite of holiness. Jesus is clear that it’s God who exalts; it’s God who doles out the award ribbons—not us. Our focus is better spent acknowledging our sins and seeking. †

“Do we ever get a feeling of holiness that leads us into haughtiness?”

Sunday Readings

Sirach 35:12–14, 16–18

“Give to the Most High... but offer no bribes; these he does not accept!”

2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18

“At my first defense no one appeared on my behalf, but everyone deserted me.”

Luke 18:9–14

“‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’”

A Word From Pope Francis

[Humility] can reach a heart only through humiliation: there is no humility without humiliation. If you are not able to bear some humiliation in your life, you are not humble. That’s how it is: I would say it’s that mathematical, it’s that simple! The goal of holiness that God gives to his children, gives to the Church, comes through the humiliation of his Son who lets himself be cursed, who lets himself be borne on the Cross, unjustly. This Son of God who humbles himself is the path of holiness.

—Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*, February 1, 2016



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

ONE QUESTION REFLECTION

- When have you been more like the Pharisee than the tax collector?
- How can you humble yourself this week to grow closer to God?

The Need for the Virtue of Humility

By Br. Victor-Antoine d'Avila-Latourrette



Humility of spirit is an essential attitude that Jesus demands from all his followers. Even when we perform good deeds, the Gospel bids us to remember that we are nothing but “useless servants.” Our present-day culture fosters self-assertion, self-exaltation, self-pride, and ultimately self-glorification. The glory is no longer given to God but to the self. The need for humility is replaced by the sin of pride.

In contrast, Jesus teaches in the story of the publican and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9–14) that God wants and expects the total opposite from the Christian. The Gospel portrays the Pharisee as self-

righteous, arrogant, and proud of himself. In his prayer, he gives a long speech to God, telling him of his accomplishments. The poor publican, however, humbles himself, and his humility pleases the Lord; thus, God hears his humble prayer. The Christian is called to choose the way of the publican. It is only through true humility of heart that we can be liberated from the prison of hopeless self-centeredness. In making our attitude that of the publican, we imitate the example of Christ himself. †

Source: *A Rhythm of Life: The Monastic View*, © 2012 Liguori Publications

Blessed Are the Meek

By Leonard Foley, OFM

If you were raised on John Wayne and Rambo, being meek sounds like following in the steps of the neighborhood wimp. We are taught to win—football games, wars, arguments. But Jesus turns the world’s values upside down.

The biblical meaning of *meek* is “unassuming, tolerant.” Truly meek people don’t throw their weight around. They are gentle yet with firm faith. They are peaceable without being compromising.

Jesus is the model, he who is “meek and humble of heart.” Matthew sees Jesus

fulfilling the prophecy about God’s great servant: “He will not contend or cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, a smoldering wick he will not quench” (Matthew 12:19–20).

The meek can restrain their anger; they can be tolerant. They are not lordly, overbearing, or haughty. They are not wimps, or spiritless or overly submissive. Yet they will go the extra mile, turn the other cheek. They don’t fight to be right or to win, but to be like Jesus. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, December 1991

PRAYER

Lord, I am grateful you are close to the brokenhearted. In my brokenness I call on you. Have mercy on me, a sinner, small and precious in your eyes.

—From *Grateful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 24–29

Mon. Weekday:
Ephesians 4:32—5:8 / Luke 13:10–17
Tue. Weekday:
Ephesians 5:21–33 / Luke 13:18–21
Wed. Weekday:
Ephesians 6:1–9 / Luke 13:22–30

Thu. Weekday:
Ephesians 6:10–20 / Luke 13:31–35
Fri. Sts. Simon and Jude:
Ephesians 2:19–22 / Luke 6:12–16
Sat. Weekday:
Philippians 1:18b–26 / Luke 14:1, 7–11

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