Sunday of 2nd Week of Lent

# PRIDE

"Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross." – St. Paul

## ST PAUL THE APOSTLE

St. Paul was a man of brilliant intellect, impeccable credentials, and uncommon religious zeal. "As to righteousness under the Law," he once boasted, he was "blameless" (Phil 3: 6). But his superior qualities led him to pride, and pride gave birth to fear and hatred. His name was Saul, and he was among the fiercest persecutors of the first Christians. Utterly self-assured in his religious practice, with absolute confidence in his interpretation of Scripture, he felt justified in terrorizing the new believers who held novel teachings. When one of their leaders was stoned to death by a mob, he watched with satisfaction.

"Breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9: 1), Saul set out from Jerusalem to the city of Damascus. His goal was to arrest the Christians there and bring them back to prison. But God had other plans. As this self-appointed religious sheriff approached Damascus, a brilliant light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground in helpless terror and heard the voice of Jesus confront him. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" "Who are you, Lord?" "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting; but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do" (Acts 9: 4–6).

With that burning, cleansing, liberating beam of radiance, Saul's pride was humbled, his hatred was neutralized, and his soul was set free of the Enemy's control. He stood up, and though his physical eyes were temporarily blinded, his spiritual eyes could finally see. Satan had lost another soldier, and this one had the makings of a general. Pride can provide an opening for Satan's entry into even the noblest soul, and so the vital importance of humility becomes readily apparent. Jesus warns us against the dangers of pride, telling us that we shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven unless we do so with the humility and trust of a little child. Pride is the deadliest of the seven deadly sins since its false God is self. One can be prideful by thinking they are better or worse than others since either way the focus is on oneself. We especially need to be on guard against pride leading to self-righteousness. Pride leads us to become so focused on our views of right and wrong that we can no longer see what is right or wrong from God's perspective. How have you felt that you were better or worse than others and so fallen into pride?

**For your prayer**

St. Paul would have prayed with Matthew 17: 1-9. Use your imagination as you slowly read Matthew 17: 1-9. Please reflect on how Jesus never fell into pride because he always saw himself as beloved of the Father. Reflect on how your true identity is as a Beloved one of God and how God desires to transform areas of sin into areas of glory.