

1. Read (Seek) — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate (Find) — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray (Ask) — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate (Taste) — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

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[1] Modern Catholic Dictionary pg. 260

[2] Modern Catholic Dictionary pg. 260

[3] CCC 2559

[4] CCC 2631

[5] cf CCC 2706, 2713

[6] CCC 2628

[7] [a letter to Frederick William](#), Prince (later King) of Prussia, dated November 28, 1770

[8] Also see *Catholicism*; Fr. Robert Barron; Episode 2

Quick Connect

What is the Gospel saying? Matthew 23:1-12 — Pg. 1

What is the Church saying Past and Present? Pages 1-3

What is God saying to you through this passage? Page 4

Gospel Reading – Matthew 23:1-12 – Roman Missal

Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens hard to carry and lay them on people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues, greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation 'Rabbi.' As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.' You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called 'Master'; you have but one master, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Spiritual Reading

From the Imitation of Christ

There is no holiness where you have withdrawn your hand, O Lord; no profitable wisdom if you cease to rule over it; no helpful strength if you cease to preserve it. For if you forsake us, we sink and perish; but if you visit us, we rise up and live again. We are unstable, but you make us firm; we grow cool, but you inflame us. All superficial glory has been swallowed up in the depths of your judgment upon me. What is all flesh in your sight? Can the clay be glorified in opposition to its Maker? How can anyone be aroused by empty talk if his heart is subject in the truth to God? The whole world cannot swell with pride the man who is subject to truth; nor will he be swayed by the flattery of all his admirers, if he has established all his trust in God. For those who do all the talking amount to nothing; they fail with their din of words, but the truth of the Lord endures for ever.

Humility - Lesson and Discussion

"but whoever humbles himself will be exalted"

What is Humility? Humility is "The moral virtue that keeps a person from reaching beyond himself. It is the virtue that restrains the unruly desire for personal greatness and leads people to an orderly love of themselves based on a true appreciation of their position with respect to God and their neighbors." "...humility is not only opposed to pride; it is also opposed to immoderate self-abjection, which would fail to recognize God's gifts and use them according to his will." [1] The

beatitude, “Blessed are the Poor in Spirit” helps us to know our spiritual poverty and we are in need spiritual. How can we be prideful when we are so aware of our need and the necessity of some other than our self, God, to fulfill that need?

How can we be humble in our spiritual life? “Religious humility recognizes one’s total dependence on God.”[2] When we start to realize how little we ultimately control in our lives, the more we can submit to the will of God. J.M. Barrie said, “Life is a long lesson in humility.” It takes our whole life to humble ourselves to where God wants us to be. Humility produces great confidence because when we are near to God, we know we are taken care of. Humility is not looking down on ourselves, but making our self “little” and remembering that we are completely dependent on God. One of the greatest forms of pride is to think that God does not know “what it’s like” or even that God does not care about our life. Others in our life may not know “what it’s like” but God does. **How do we know that God knows what it is like?** We know because He is the Creator of each one of us and knows not only every hair on our head, but every emotion and feeling. (Matthew 10:30) We also know because He died on the Cross, uniting all human suffering to His own for the salvation of souls. In showing compassion to others we can only know “what it’s like” if we are united to Christ, it is only in Christ that we can have compassion for the homeless man, the woman considering abortion and many others in pain. Humility helps our prayer life. **How does humility help our prayer life?** “Humility is the foundation of prayer. Only when we humbly acknowledge that ‘we do not know how to pray as we ought,’ (Rom 8:26) are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer.”[3]

Humility is asking for forgiveness in prayer.[4] It also helps with contemplation and meditation on our Lord.[5] We can do this in the heart of Christ in adoration. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is the “first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator...Adoration of the thrice-holy and sovereign God of love blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications.”[6]

What does it mean to be exalted? Being exalted means holding someone or something in very high regard or to speak highly of them or it. It can also mean giving praise to someone. **Is it wrong to be exalted and praised?** No, it is not wrong to receive compliments, praise and cheers for our accomplishments as long as we know that God is the reason for these things. Jesus spoke in the Gospel of the Pharisees and scribes who had taken the positions of great stature and were being praised and exalted for it. They soaked it all in and gave no honor to God. This is why Christ tells us to be humble ourselves; “Whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” (Mat. 23:12)

Why do we pray to God in the entrance antiphon, “Do not abandon me, Lord. My God, do not go away from me! Hurry to help me, Lord, my Savior.” If we truly know what God does for us, we will

always pray with the attitude, My God, do not go away, do not abandon me, hurry to help me. The spiritual reading in this packet says much of what God does for us and what life would be like if there was no God. “There is no holiness where you have withdrawn your hand, O Lord; no profitable wisdom if you cease to rule over it; no helpful strength if you cease to preserve it. For if you forsake us, we sink and perish; but if you visit us, we rise up and live again. We are unstable, but you make us firm; we grow cool, but you inflame us.” No holiness, no wisdom, no strength, no stability and no zeal or passion. The fact is that if God were to cease to exist or even cease to think of us, we would vanish out of existence. There are many things we enjoy in the world. We might like chocolate a lot. What if the existence of chocolate across the world was dependent on us keeping it on our mind always? In other words if we were to at any second stop thinking about chocolate it would vanish. This is impossible for humans, but possible for the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving God. The necessity of God is so evident that the philosophy Voltaire said, “If God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him. But all nature cries aloud that he does exist; that there is a supreme intelligence, an immense power, an admirable order, and everything teaches us our own dependence on it.”[7] Voltaire struggled in his belief in the existence of God. He was often seen walking circles around Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, France shaking his fist at the grand cathedral. His frustration may lie in his very words that there is a need for God. If there is a need for God, could it possibly be true, that in fact, there is a God to meet that need. In the physical world it is true that if there is a need, there is also a solution to the need. This law would then also apply to not only the physical needs of man, but also the spiritual needs of man.

What keeps us from seeking and trusting in God? Saint Thomas Aquinas identifies four main areas which humans tend to seek, trust and put in the place of God: honor, wealth, power and pleasure.[8] When we are focused on these and try to obtain these by our own means it is easy to become prideful and feel as if we do not need God. Truth and trust is the antidote to the poison of pride. For example if we know the truth and see reality as it is we will know that we cannot provide everything for our self but that it is God that supplies our needs and happiness (pleasure). If we trust in God, there is no need to be concerned about what others think of us (honor), trying to grasp ahold of worldly goods (wealth) or being envious and uncharitable to others (power).