

Homily for the 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time

October 27, 2019

By Nick Thompson

“O God be merciful to me a sinner.” So, what exactly is humility? Dictionaries portray humility as someone having a low self-regard and sense of unworthiness. And so, we laugh when Mac Davis sings: Oh Lord it's hard to be humble When you're perfect in every way I can't wait to look in the mirror Cause I get better looking each day. To know me is to love me I must be a heck of a man. Oh Lord it's hard to be humble But I'm doing the best that I can.

In a religious context however humility is considered recognition of self in relation to God, realizing that God is all powerful and in charge. For instance, Concerning Obedience and Service in the World Paul's letter to Philippians 2:5-11 tells us: *“In our relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. 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. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in*

heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. So then, my beloved, obedient as you have always been, not only when I am present but all the more now when I am absent, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work."

Humility to we the faithful then begins with a sense of subordination to God in Christ. True humility makes way for Christ and throws the soul at his feet. *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master"* says (Matthew 10:24). *"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God"* chimes in (1 Peter 5:6). As Jesus adds in Matthew 5:3, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* Let's face it: Humility isn't a very popular word in politics or amongst Hollywood and sports heroes, yet, throughout scripture, the Lord instructs us about the benefits of being "humble-minded." James 4:6 says, *"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."* In other words, the humble folk get the grace!

Because of its dictionary meaning, humility is too often misunderstood and even viewed as a weakness. But given its Christian meaning it's the exact opposite. Humility is the truest abstinence in the world. It is abstinence from self-love and self-conceit, from vaunting our own praise and exploits, from ambition and greed, the strongest

propensities of our human nature, and consequently is the noblest self-denial. Humility places us in a position to receive God's grace and become everything He's called us to be. Not by the works of our hands but by becoming the works of His hands. Not to take credit but to place the credit where it rightfully belongs in the hands of God.

A humble person is also a *happy* person. They can like Mother Theresa take joy in their life, in doing what God has called them to do, regardless of what the world thinks about it. For instance, we may think our current ministry as caretakers of our children, elderly or disabled with its circumstances and responsibilities from God is insignificant. The proud person always wants to do something they think the world will admire ... something others see as "important." But the truth is we don't have to do something important to *be* important. We are important simply because God loves and values us. Our worth comes from Him. As we receive His love and find our true worth *in Him*, then we can truly enjoy our purpose in life and live in contentment.

So many people are miserable, constantly comparing themselves to others who are smarter, prettier or more successful. But the "poor in spirit" have the ability to be happy with who they are. What are some other character traits of a humble person?

The humble can always ask for help, and they don't insist on everything being done their way. They are quick to forgive others,

difficult to offend, and content to wait on God for vindication when they have been wronged. They listen to Sirach, today's first reading, and trust that the Lord is a God of justice, who knows no favorites.

They are patient and don't get frustrated with the weaknesses of others. The humble person is a peacemaker. In fact, we need humility to maintain peace in our lives. Romans 12:16 says, *"Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not be haughty but associate with the lowly. Do not pretend to be wiser than you are."* Wow! Just imagine if we all decided to adopt just this one command from the Bible. It's the way that leads to peace with our self and others.

A humble person knows when to be quiet. It's certainly not wrong to talk, but a humble person is comfortable allowing others to have center stage and doesn't feel the need to speak their mind in every situation. After all Sirach advises us the one who serves God willingly is heard his petition reaches the heavens.

A humble person sees their own weaknesses and can readily admit them. When we open up to others about ourselves, it can actually encourage and help them realize they're not the only ones who deal with things. Sirach encourages us that God Though not unduly partial toward the weak, yet he hears the cry of the oppressed.

A humble person happily serves other people, and they don't do it to impress others. They do it unto God, knowing their reward will come

from God. A humble person is very thankful. This is one reason they're usually so happy. When we live with an attitude of gratitude, it releases joy and power into our lives.

A humble person has a tender conscience and is quick to repent. A leader who is truly humble treats everyone with respect. Observing how a leader treats people is the quickest way to find out their level of humility. First Peter 5:6 says, "*Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.*" The older I get, the more I realize the importance of humility. In John 15:5, Jesus says, "*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit. For without Me you can do nothing.*" I often pray things like: "Lord, I can do absolutely *nothing* without You today. Please help me—I need Your grace in every situation."

Today we are encouraged to pray and ask for God's help. By His grace, we can begin to develop an attitude of humility ... *and discover the life we really want.* Psalm 34 cries out to us, "*The Lord hears the cry of the poor! When the just cry out, the lord hears them and from all their distress he rescues them.*" Thomas a' Kempis wrote, "God walks with the humble; he reveals himself to the lowly; he gives understanding to the little ones; he discloses his meaning to pure hearts but hides his grace from the curious and the proud. Lord don't hide your face from us! Lord

save us from ourselves! Teach us to pray with the tax collector, “O God
Be merciful to me a sinner.”

And sing with Kris Kristoferson:

Why me Lord? What have I ever done To deserve even one Of the pleasures I've known.

Tell me Lord, What did I ever do That was worth lovin' you For the kindness you've shown.

Lord help me Jesus I've wasted it so help me Jesus I know what I am But now that I know That I needed you so help me Jesus My souls in your hand

Try me Lord If you think there's a way I can try to repay All I've takin' from you

Maybe Lord I can show someone else What I've been through myself On my way back to you

Lord help me Jesus I've wasted it so help me Jesus I know what I am But now that I know That I needed you so help me Jesus My souls in your hand.