

# STANDING FAST

## *Very Reverend Glenn Jones*

Vicar General, Vicar for Clergy, Vicar for Religious

Reprinted with permission, *Los Alamos Daily Post*  
(September 19, 2021)

Hmm ... equinox this week, and so autumn begins this week. Ah, spring and autumn—favorite times of the year ... the first showcasing beauty of new life, and the autumn foliage an analogy for Christians of the inevitability of death, and yet with anticipation and faith of future resurrection.

Well, the kids are all firmly ensconced and absorbed with their classes by now. We certainly hope this year has lesser disruption than last when COVID burst upon the scene. Cheers to the teachers who had to do all the remote teaching, and at times remote and in-class teaching.

That came to mind with this week's Mass Gospel. When you read the Gospels, you see that Jesus often notably sat when He taught, as the Gospel of Mark makes special note: "Then He sat down...". (Mark 9:35) With parchment or vellum as a writing material being expensive and precious when this was written, to record what seems to us like a rather extraneous observation seems unnecessary. But, for the Jews of Jesus' time, a rabbi would often sit when teaching something of special importance or solemnity. We see this perhaps most notably in Matthew at the Sermon on the Mount: "Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him... 'Blessed are the poor in spirit...,'" etc. (Matthew 5:1)

So, what was this very notable teaching of Jesus in this Sunday's Gospel? Humility ... that greatest of virtues, and from which all other virtues flow. Humility is the direct indication of God's grace working within a person, while arrogance is opposed to grace. In fact, Proverbs tells us: "Everyone who is arrogant is an abomination to the LORD..." (Proverbs 16:5) We see in the Creation story how humility's opposite—pride—was the first sin: "...the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of [the forbidden fruit] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So...she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate." (Genesis 3:4-6)

As most Christians know, the Jews of Jesus' time (and thus the apostles) believed that their Messiah would be an earthly ruler—like King David or Solomon—and who would establish a kingdom, defeating and ejecting foreign occupiers. But the divine plan was something else entirely, God not concerned with a trivial earthly kingdom, but rather the all-encompassing Heavenly one ... which is entered not with pride and arrogance, but by humility: "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all." It is a kingdom reached through service and humility ... fruits of a true faith.

All throughout the Gospels, Jesus continuously stresses humility ... both in His words and, even more so, in His actions. He calls us to be humble like children—not child-ish in faith, but rather child-like ... trusting in God as a child trusts a beneficent father. "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3-4)

# STANDING FAST

## *Very Reverend Glenn Jones*

Vicar General, Vicar for Clergy, Vicar for Religious

Reprinted with permission, *Los Alamos Daily Post*  
(September 19, 2021)

Jesus teaches humility, and He LIVES humility, and integral to humility is obedience to the Father's will, which Jesus did freely and absolutely, as St. Paul tells us: "...he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." And the result of that absolute humble obedience? Paul continues: "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name...[and] every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

But both humility and obedience necessarily entail sacrifice—the sacrifice of foregoing our own easily-corrupted, selfish will and desires for the recognition and preference of a greater good—to further humanity's common good on earth, and even more essential, the eternal good which is the will of the Father. This willingness to sacrifice and love of God is what Jesus showed us in highest degree, acquiescing even in the foreknowledge of His Passion: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39) And, of course, He would go on to suffer His trials all the way to death on the cross.

I often tell young people that Jesus' willingness to sacrifice Himself illustrates that the strongest person remains steadfast in his determination to do the good rather than crumble in the face of peer pressure. As Confucius said: "He who conquers himself is the mightiest warrior."

More than a few of both adults and children often have told me that they are targets of disdain or detraction at work or school for their Christian/Catholic beliefs. But we should not be surprised at such; Jesus warned that that would happen. So, O Christian ... will you yield your conviction in the winds of challenge, or will you not rather stand steadfastly and courageously in your faith ... like a rock defying the raging surf of the world's approval, often very different from the way of God? Is not the test of one's character in the firmness of his conviction? Remember Shakespeare again: "A coward dies a thousand deaths; the brave only once."

Our spiritual character is defined at whether we stand with our faith, with goodness ... regardless of challenge. Each time we resist challenge, we steel ourselves for next time should the challenge increase. But resist such tests, not arrogantly or harshly, but in the manner that St. James exhorts us: "...wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without inconstancy or insincerity. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace." (James 3:17-18)

So ... to continue St. Paul: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you...Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life..." (Philippians 2:8-16)