

# **Humility Rules: Saint Benedict's Guide to Genuine Self-Esteem**

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### **Discussion Guide**

#### **St. Benedict's Ladder of Humility:**

##### **Step 1: Fear of God-Be Afraid**

Always have the fear of God before your eyes and avoid all thoughtlessness so that you are constantly mindful of everything God has commanded. We should love Jesus, but we should be in awe of him. We seem to have different viewpoints of God, depending on what you believe. Is He your buddy, your friend? Is He someone to fear, ready to smite you? How does the author help us to bridge that contradiction?

Homework: Let someone less competent than you tell you what to do.

##### **Step 2: Self-Denial-Don't be true to yourself**

Do not be in love with your will but put into practice that word of the Lord which says: "I have come down from heaven not to do my will but the will of him who sent me" (Jn 6:38). What feels best for you may not be best for the people around you. What is the difference between self-fulfillment and self-satisfaction?

Homework: Let someone tell you a story you have already heard.

##### **Step 3: Obedience-Don't follow your dreams**

For the love of God, be obedient to those in authority over you, imitating the Lord, of whom the apostle says: He became "obedient unto death" (Phil2:8). We must accept God's will without knowing God's will. Obedience is what saves us from following the wrong dreams.

Homework: The next time you see something not done your way, leave it be if it works.

##### **Step 4: Perseverance-Suffer fools gladly**

The key to perseverance is to always remember the goal is heaven. The author suggests you must go out and be a witness of peace and stability to a culture that has lost its balance. How can we do that in our everyday lives? Above all else, avoid grumbling. How does grumbling undermine all we do?

Homework: Spend an entire day without correcting someone.

##### **Step 5: Repentance-Put your best foot forward**

Never hide any of the evil thoughts which arise in your heart or the evils you commit in secret. Instead, reveal them to someone you trust. For scripture says: "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him" (Ps 37:5) Never water down an apology with an excuse; if you've done wrong, own up to it. It is very difficult for non-Catholics to accept the concept of confession. Do the 10 Commandments continue to be our guiding light?

Homework: Make no excuses the next time you are reprimanded.

##### **Step 6: Serenity-Be someone's doormat**

When ill treatment comes your way, try to accept it. Learn to be content with the lowliest and worst of everything, and in all that is demanded of you. Forgiveness doesn't mean hiding your anger or covering it up with pleasant feelings. Be content with the lowliest and worst of everything; if you do so, there is never a wasted moment. How do we decide between fun and joy?

Homework: Deliberately walk or drive behind someone slow.

### **Step 7: Self-Abasement-Have a poor self-image**

Believe in your heart that you are an unworthy servant of God, humbling yourself and saying with the Prophet: "I am a worm, and no man; scorned by men, and despised by the people" (Ps 22:6). Knowing your limits is so crucial to knowing yourself. What is the difference between self-abasement and self-deprecation? Mother Teresa said "There are no great deeds. Only small deeds with great love." We have heard this quote before, but now knowing the rules of St. Benedict, do you feel you understand this idea in a different way?

Homework: Clean a toilet.

### **Step 8: Prudence-Think inside the box**

Only do what is lawful and follow the example of your elders. Besides discussing chastity, the author talks about how we treat others and the world around us. "So regardless of how you feel about climate change or species extinction or resource depletion, the material world should be treated with enormous care because it doesn't belong to us." Is there a division between the physical world and the spiritual world, as was thought in the past? What are some of the things that the Pope has said about climate change and the environment?

### **Step 9: Silence-Don't speak up**

Only speak when you are spoken to, for Scripture says, "When words are many, transgression is not lacking" (Prov 10:19). Every moment of silence is an opportunity to listen to God. God's first language is silence, all else is translation. Wetta talks about the ministers that preach as if they are a game show host. What are the differences between the quietness and solemnness of the Mass and services that you have seen or heard about in other Churches? Have you tried driving in the car without the radio or music?

Homework: Refrain from having the last word in your next conversation (even if it is friendly).

### **Step 10: Dignity-Laughter is not the best medicine**

Do not be too quick to laugh, for it is written: "A fool raises his voice when he laughs" (Sir 21:20).

In a Renaissance literature class discussing Paradise Lost, the professor pointed out at that time people were extremely superstitious and really believed that there were angels and demons all around them fighting for their souls. Who are the angels and demons that are fighting for our souls in the present age?

Homework: Spend an entire day without looking at a screen.

### **Step 11: Discretion-Be unassertive**

If you must speak, do so gently, humbly, earnestly, and quietly, with few and sensible words; for it is written: "The wise man is known by the fewness of his words." Discretion means knowing when to keep your opinion to yourself. St. Benedict believes that fairness and proportion are intrinsic to the good order of the community. How do we restore harmony when we have responded at a level that does not fit the situation?

Homework: Let yourself be interrupted in a conversation, and don't finish what you were going to say unless someone asks.

### **Step 12: Reverence-Keep your chin down**

Wherever you go, bow your head in prayer, remembering the words of the publican: "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Lk 18:13). Benedict wants his monks to feel the importance of the Sabbath, and that is helped by being present and being on time. What do you do to prepare for your time in Church on Sunday?