



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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The importance of humility during Lent and beyond

In response to a recent statement I wrote on immigration, someone wrote to tell me, among other things, that I am arrogant. That's not the first time I've heard that.

The bishop who ordained me, a few years after he ordained me, told me once that I am the most prideful person he has ever met. In response I slugged him in the mouth. Well, not really, but I wanted to, because his words hurt.

It has taken me years to see the truth of his accusation, to own it, and to try to be humble (though not successfully, according to the person who called me arrogant).

O Lord, it's hard to be humble (when you're perfect in every way).

The word humility comes from the Latin word for dirt, which corresponds well to what it means to be humble: just as ground is beneath us, humility leads us to go low.

To go low in our thought: acknowledging that I am not God, or in control, or all that.

And to go low in our behavior: apologizing to, forgiving of and serving the needs of whomever, regardless of who the person is, or whether that person is deserving, asks nicely, knows the cost to me, or is grateful – none of that matters.

It's important to be humble because of the teaching and example of Jesus, who told his followers to strive to be the last of all and the servant of all, which he – the teacher and Lord – illustrated by washing their stinky, dirty feet.

It's also important because humility is the remedy for pride, which is the mother of all sins, and which goeth before the falleth, as in the case of a fallen angel that became the devil.

The importance of humility is why the holy season of Lent begins with the gospel of Jesus warning against practicing religion to be noticed and so puff up our pride. And why afterwards dirt is thrown on our heads, with the reminder that we are dirt.

Maybe a good Lenten program would be to cast out pride by building up humility, learning to say...

* Please – expressing the need for God and others; I am not self-sufficient

* Thank you – acknowledging something not owed to me; no sense of entitlement

* How may I help you – as we receive, so we give to others; paying it forward

Humbling ourselves is the only path to the exalted status of life in Christ here, and to the joy in the hereafter that comes from the peace of having our desires satisfied in the perfect union with God.

Do it before love compels God to do it for us, to us. If we don't humble ourselves, God will lead us to humility through humiliation, giving us, out of love, what we need to be good, wise and strong... and humble.

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