

“Prayer is the raising of our mind and heart to God ... But when we pray, do we speak from the height of our pride and will, or ‘out of the depths’ of a humble and contrite heart?” (CCC 2559). In our pride, all too often we find fault with others. In our pride, we lift up sin and glorify it as we chastise the ways of God. In our pride, we glorify ourselves and condemn those who do not think like us. “‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity—greedy, dishonest, adulterous—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.’ But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’ I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted” (Lk 18:11-14). In the words of the prophet Ezekiel: “I, The LORD, bring low the high tree, lift high the lowly tree” (Ez 17:24).

Failure is often an antidote for false pride. When we hit rock bottom and have nowhere else to turn, humility returns ... and we can be like the prodigal son. Out of the depths of a humble and contrite heart he sought to return home as a servant. We too can wither like a tree that has no water, poor soil and too much sun. Through forgiveness, the Lord can restore life and vigor helping the withered tree to bloom again. “I, the LORD, ... wither up the green tree, and make the withered tree bloom” (Ez 17:24). “Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found” (Lk 15:22-24).

“Prayer is the raising of our mind and heart to God ...” When we listen humbly in prayer, the LORD tries to guide us. Our efforts might be likened to the tiniest mustard seed. With a little faith and lots of God’s help, the tiniest seed becomes the largest of plants. At other times, the LORD may plant a seed with us and ask us to do the hard work of nurturing the seed through all of the stages of growth until it blossoms as the LORD intended. That nurturing may take generations to bear fruit. It takes humility and patience to recognize progress. When I was in the southwest working at a Catholic Indian Mission School, I remember the pastor acknowledging that the seeds of faith had been sewn 70 years before his arrival. He was there to continue the pastoral work of helping the seeds to bear fruit.

“Prayer is the raising of our mind and heart to God ...” I think back to my father who always had a pen in hand and a scrap of paper nearby. He did not want to miss out on an inspiration that the Lord might share with him. Pondering in silence, tiny seeds of verse came to him.

There's a spiritual growth in each human being,  
To soothe and satisfy a hungry feeling.  
The growth must start from tiny seeds,  
To nourish the soul for daily needs.

The seeds are gifts from the heavens above \_\_\_  
From part of God’s endless garden of love.  
Each soul is like a fruitful farm,  
With seeds of grace to ward off harm.

On earth God’s Kingdom will know sweet release,  
When mankind plants the seeds of peace.

Seeds of patience will heartily produce  
An inner serenity .... an inner truce.

Greater happiness comes to each girl and boy \_\_\_  
From inner seeds that sprout with joy.  
Pick kindness for an abundant yield ....  
It's a universal favorite in every field.

Grow love ... it is truly the cream of the crop;  
The rewards are endless .... they never stop.  
Love, joy, and kindness help you to cope;  
They are seeds of eternal hope.

When the harvest yields patience and the peace of a dove  
You've entered God's great garden of love.  
Kindness ... patience .... peace .... joy and love combined \_\_\_  
Are God's greatest gift to all mankind!<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Tozzi, E.M. God's Garden of Love: Seeds of Joy .... Kindness .... Peace .... Patience .... and Love