

22nd Ordinary Sunday

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Become Popular! Go viral! ‘Boom’ this is what the world tells us is the key to success. There is always a temptation and tendency rooted in human nature for the desire to become famous. We know that Jesus was also tempted with fame and glory. And then, there was a man who said: “I will never bow down before anyone: except one fellow, the barber; only because, if I don’t bow my head before him he won’t cut my hair.”

Today, in the Reading from Sirach and the Gospel according to St. Luke, Jesus teaches us the golden rule for our lives: become humble, or practice humility.

In the Book of Sirach, the advice is: “My child perform your task with humility; then you will be loved by those whom God accepts. The greater you are, the more you must humble yourself; so you will find favour in the sight of the Lord.” Similarly, Jesus proclaims to the crowd: “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” Even Confucius, thousands of years ago, echoed: “Humility is the solid foundation of all the virtues.”

During my philosophical studies, I wondered about the great philosopher Socrates and how he dealt with his opponents, the challenges of life, and even his ill-tempered wife. Socrates was able to face everything with a serene heart because he was so humble, and he practiced intellectual humility, believing in the limits of his own knowledge: “The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.” He was certain that humility was a necessary precursor to finding Truth, allowing for genuine philosophical inquiry and challenging the arrogance of those who claimed to possess it. This intellectual humility made him appear wise and allowed him to engage with people from all walks of life.

You may know Saint Augustine’s famous quote on humility: “It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels.” St. Augustine considered ‘pride’ the archetypal sin as it turns one away from God, and it hinders the human mind



from grasping the importance and the teaching of humility and its lowliness in the Gospel. According to St. Augustine, pride leads the human soul to pursue empty glory that will eventually result in one's spiritual fall. The virtue that counteracts pride is humility; and humility, according to St. Augustine, is not just thinking less of oneself but of thinking of oneself less: giving priority to others and God instead.

Mother Teresa considered humility the mother of all virtues: "If you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are. If you are blamed you will not be discouraged. If they call you a saint you will not put yourself on a pedestal."

During his general audience in Saint Peter's Square on May 22, 2024, Pope Francis said: "Humility is the Gateway to all Virtues." Pope Francis viewed humility as what "saves us from the devil and from the danger of becoming his accomplices." He continued: "Humility is the source of peace in the world and in the church. Where there is no humility, there is war, there is discord; there is division."

In the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, meaning *All Brothers*, Pope Francis reminds us of a simple and great truth that we easily run the risk of forgetting in the hustle and bustle of daily life, and that is "We are not God." Indeed, the fact that we are creatures is the deepest truth about our being; that we received our existence from God. When we accept this fundamental truth, we allow ourselves to be transformed by Divine Grace. We can then know reality as it is, perfect it, and offer it back to God, while truly loving the world. At the center of this immense endeavour lies humility, which helps us to recognize, at one and the same time, both our wretchedness and our greatness.

Hence, 'humility' is godly but 'pride' is worldly. God works through humility and pride kills divinity. The story of the first King of Israel, Saul, is an example of how pride vanquished divine power. For instance, before the war against the Philistines, Saul performed an unlawful sacrifice without the Prophet Samuel and stubbornly refused to follow the command of God when God commanded Saul to completely destroy the

Amalekites and all their possessions. Instead, Saul spared King Agag and the best of his livestock, and lied about it to Samuel. Saul considered himself better than God and His prophet, and the consequence of his arrogance and pride led him to lose everything: the loss of the Spirit of God, the loss of his throne, and the loss of his dynasty. The only thing that caused all the mess in his life was his pride and his self-glorification.

It is only with humility do we understand that we are not God, nor are we equal to God.

From this, we know that:

- Only the humble find favour in the sight of God.
- Humility is not self-deprecation but rather gives more importance to others, while not diminishing any qualities of the person.
- The humble becomes noble in the midst of the world.
- A humble person always depends on God rather than oneself.
- A humble person makes bridges but a prideful person makes walls.
- A humble person is always ready to ask for forgiveness, is penitent when in error, and is ever ready to forgive.
- Humility leads one to be accepting of the realities of life.
- Humble people are always thankful to God and to others.
- A humble person rejoices in the joy of others.

Always be mindful that we have a God who humbled himself, as St. Paul declared in his Letter to the Philippians (2:6-9):

“... who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name.”