

HUMILITY

Growing in Humility

Be very careful about your interior thoughts, especially if they have to do with importance. May God, by His Passion, keep us from expressing, or dwelling upon, such thoughts as these: “But I am her senior [in the Order]”; “But I am older”; “But I have worked harder”; “But that other sister is being better treated than I am”. If these thoughts come, you must quickly check them; if you allow yourselves to dwell on them, or introduce them into your conversation, they will spread like the plague and *in religious houses* they may give rise to great abuses. (W12,4)

Take this advice from me and do not forget it: you should see to it that your sisters profit by your temptations, not only interiorly (where it would be very wrong if they did not), but exteriorly as well. If you want to avenge yourself on the devil and free yourselves more quickly from temptation, ask the superior, as soon as a temptation comes to you, to give you some lowly office to do, or do some such thing, as best you can, on our own initiative, studying as you do it how to bend your will to perform tasks you dislike. The Lord will show you ways of doing so and this will soon rid you of the temptation. (W 12,7)

For, indeed, it takes great humility to find oneself unjustly condemned and be silent, and to do this is to imitate the Lord Who set us free from all our sins. I beg you, then, to study earnestly to do so, for it brings great gain; whereas I can see no gain in our trying to free ourselves from blame: none whatever—save, as I say, in a few cases where hiding the truth might cause offence or scandal. (W 15,1)

True Humility

I think it is very important to accustom oneself to practice this virtue and to endeavor to obtain from the Lord the true humility which must result from it. The truly humble person will have a genuine desire to be thought little of, and persecuted, and condemned unjustly, even in serious matters. For, if she desires to imitate the Lord, how can she do so better than in this? And no bodily strength is necessary here, nor the aid of anyone save God. (W 16, 2)

...When the prayer comes from God’s spirit, there is no need to go dredging up things in order to derive some humility and shame because the Lord himself gives this prayer in a manner very different from that which we gain through our nice little reasoning. For such humility is nothing in comparison with the true humility the Lord with His Light here teaches and which causes an embarrassment that undoes one. It is well known that God gives knowledge that makes us realize we have no good of ourselves and the greater the favors, the greater is this knowledge. (L 15,14)

Humility, Love, Truth

It is the queen which gives the king most trouble in this game of chess and all the other pieces support her. There is no queen who can beat this King as well as humility can; for humility brought Him down from Heaven into the Virgin’s womb and with humility we can draw Him into our souls by a single hair. Be sure that He will give most humility to him who has most already and least to him who has least. I cannot understand how humility exists, or can exist, without love, or love without humility, and it is impossible for these two virtues to exist save where there is great detachment from all created things. (W 16,2)

Once, while I was wondering why our Lord so dearly loves the virtue of humility, the thought suddenly struck me, without previous reflection, that it is because God is the supreme Truth and humility is to proceed in *truth*, for it is most true that we have nothing good of ourselves but only misery and nothingness: whoever ignores this, lives a life of falsehood. They that realize this fact

most deeply are the most pleasing to God, the supreme Truth, for they walk in the truth. God grant, sisters, that we may have the grace never to lose this self-knowledge! Amen. (6 IC 10,7)

I seem now to be beginning my treatment of prayer, but there still remains a little for me to say, which is of great importance because it has to do with humility, and in this house that is necessary. For humility is the principal virtue which must be practiced by those who pray, and, as I have said, it is very fitting that you should try to learn how to practice it often: that is one of the chief things to remember about it and it is very necessary that it should be known by all who practice prayer. (W 17,1)

I do not say this without good reason, for, as I have said, it is very important for us to realize that God does not lead us all by the same road, and perhaps she who believes herself to be going along the lowest of roads is the highest in the Lord's eyes. So it does not follow that, because all of us in this house practice prayer, we all have to be contemplatives. That is impossible; and those of us who are not would be greatly discouraged if we did not grasp the truth that contemplation is something given by God, and, as it is not necessary for salvation and God does not ask it of us before He gives us our reward, we must not suppose that anyone else will require it of us. We shall not fail to attain perfection if we do what has been said here; we may, in fact, gain much more merit, because what we do will cost us more effort; the Lord will be treating us like those who are strong and will be laying up for us all that we cannot enjoy in this life. Let us not be discouraged, then, and give up prayer or cease doing what the rest do; for the Lord sometimes tarries long, and gives us as great rewards all at once as He has been giving to others over many years. (W 17, 2)

Saint Martha was holy, but we are not told that she was a contemplative. What more do you want than to be able to grow to be like that blessed woman, who was worthy to receive Christ our Lord so often in her house, and to prepare meals for Him, and to serve Him and perhaps to eat at table with Him? If she had been absorbed in devotion [all the time], as the Madeleine was, there would have been no one to prepare a meal for this Divine Guest. (W 17,5)

Remember that there must be someone to cook the meals and count yourselves happy in being able to serve like Martha. Reflect that true humility consists to a great extent in being ready for what the Lord desires to do with you and happy that He should do it, and in always considering yourselves unworthy to be called His servants. If contemplation and mental and vocal prayer and tending the sick and serving in the house and working at even the lowliest tasks are of service to the Guest who comes to stay with us and to eat and take His recreation with us, what should it matter to us if we do one of these things rather than another? (W 17, 6)

... Be sure that, if you do what lies in your power and prepare yourself for *high* contemplation with the perfection aforementioned, then, if He does not grant it you (and I think He will not fail to do so if you have true detachment and humility), it will be because He has laid up this gift for you so as to give it you in Heaven, and because, as I have said elsewhere, He is pleased to treat you like people who are strong and give you a cross to bear on earth like that which His Majesty Himself always bore. (W17, 7)

For Personal Reflection:

- Is the washing of Jesus' feet an act of self-debasement and humiliation or is it something else?
- Our Lord, wrote Teresa, loved the virtue of humility. How does this relate to the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican?