

OCTOBER 2, 2022: 27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



A few months back I went to confession and confessed about my struggle with truly embracing and living out the virtue of humility. There are many things that can get in the way of the gift of humility and at times it feels like I hit all the obstacles. A prayer that truly helps me in this regard is the Litany of Humility. This prayer, which I pray every day, is a constant reminder to me of the many different ways I truly fall short. The penance the priest gave was essentially to write this article and speak about the dangers of not cultivating this virtue.

Why is humility so necessary for living a true Christian life? Why is it truly dangerous not to seek to grow in this virtue? The very foundation of Christian life is about relationship. And it is about being in right relationship with God, others, self, and creation. It is only possible for these relationships to be as they should be through the virtue of humility. When we are not in right relationship then our view of the world and life is skewed and disordered. Generally, we will come to view things in context of how they affect me personally. The view is one that is self-centered rather than other centered. And, as such, one's determination of how things should be ordered and how life is lived becomes based on an inner determination. In other words, each person has the right to self-determine his or her own sense of truth. This will draw us further away from God and truth itself, which is real, objective, and unchangeable. Without humility it is not possible to have a real relationship with God and without a relationship with God we cannot have a real relationship with others, self, or creation. To achieve life's true goal, which is union with God, we must understand how God has decided this must happen. Only when we humble ourselves before God can we be open to hear what God desires from us.

Humility is both an attitude and a way of life that begins first with understanding one's complete dependence upon God for all things. We do not get to determine how our relationship with God should work. God has created us in His image and likeness. God knows the gifts and talents he has given us. But also, unfortunately, the Fall has created realities that bring disorder within ourselves and the world. God did not create this disorder but will give us the grace to either overcome or live with our disordered affections and desires. The first thing is we need to come to understand what God intends and work to be open to grace that allows us to live our lives as God created us to do so. Life is not about achieving personal happiness. It is about discovering the person God created us to be and seeking to live out that life. It is this openness that is essentially the life of humility. It is not about the person self-determining one's truth but being on a journey of discovery, of coming to know God and through coming to know God coming to know oneself. Without humility, none of this is possible. We are not therefore living a life centered in God but ourselves, which means all other relationships are broken and fractured since they do not have the one true foundation which is God.

But in humility we begin to lay that foundation in our lives which then leads us to a proper relationship with others. Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. It must be in that order. Love of neighbor or other means recognizing that we are all in the same boat. It is seeing the other as God sees them. It is about seeking to love each and every human being on this planet with unconditional love. We do not get to pick and choose who to love and treat with respect and dignity. If they exist, then God loves them. If God loves them, then we must love them. Humility seeks to not really see the best in everyone but rather to recognize that before God we are all broken sinners in need of God's compassion and mercy. And without the saving actions of Christ on the cross and resurrection, we all deserve hell. No human being is truly good, that word really should be reserved for God alone. Rather, each person has an opportunity to be saved in and through Christ. We as Christians have a responsibility to bring all people to Christ. Not because we are better than them but because the truth of Christ has been placed in our hearts by our loving God. And we must share that truth with them in order to help them open a true relationship with God and also discover the truth of themselves. Our relationship with others than is ultimately always about leading them to Christ. Not necessarily with just words spoken, which at times is necessary, but equally important is living a life that shows Christ through us. We must become their servants as Christ is our servant.

As we humble ourselves to God and others, as we must, it will lead us to recognize that creation is not ours to do with as we want. Rather, all that exists comes from God. All that exists God has endowed with a purpose, meaning and order to it. We are called to only make use of God's creation in the way God intends it to be used. And we must use it in a way that leads to God's greater glory. In humility we see creation for what it truly is, a gift from God.

When we come to be in right relationship with God, others, and creation, only then can we truly open up to how we are in relationship with ourselves. Life is not about me, my desires, my way of seeing the world and myself, and so forth. Life is about how I come to humble myself to open myself to my need and dependence upon God. See how I am called to be a servant to others. Recognize that I am not an owner but steward of creation. All this is only through the virtue of humility. And we must realize that this is how Christ lived his life. It is the only way then to truly embrace our humanity. "Though he was in form of God, Jesus did not deem equality with God something to be grasped. Rather he humbled himself...."

When we choose to reject a life of humility, we come to reject what it means to be truly human. We reject the way of salvation and therefore we reject the way of Christ. May we follow the way of Christ and embrace a true life of humility.

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@theholyrood.org , or if easier please call me at 978-254-0560.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,



Fr. Brian