Humility: An Important Tool for Spiritual Growth

In the Gospel we meet two sons; one says that he will go and work as his father asks but does not go, and the other says no at first but then goes and works. The sons symbolize two different groups of people Jesus would meet; the tax collectors and prostitutes who at first say “no” to God but then have the humility to realize they need God and should chose a better way; and the Pharisees and chief priests being those who give lip service to God but lack the humility to admit they are sinners too.

Humility is an important tool, because it helps us to grow and prevents us from getting too high on our horse. While we want to celebrate progress, we also want to honestly assess how we need to grow. So how do we do that?

Practically speaking, a few things that I think that we can do include praying for it and with that examining our conscience every day. Sometimes as we do this, we might become aware of situations where we were expectant, or not serving others as we should have; or also situations where we were arrogant. A great prayer is the “Litany of Humility.” Look it up as each part of the prayer deals with things we battle, and the prayer asks for help and being delivered from such things as the desire of being honored, praised and approved, and delivery from fears of being humiliated, forgotten, ridiculed, wronged or suffering rebuke.

With this, we can also ask for help. We can’t do it alone; and sometimes with sin, we do not want to see it. But remember admitting a struggle is a sign of strength; sometimes we need to seek out a friend, a confidant, a professional who can help us through something we battle.

We can also obey legitimate superiors. The sin of the devil was pride; he refused to obey God because he wanted the glory. Generally, no one is going to force you to do something once you are a “grown up,” but how easy it can be to rebel. To say that the Church isn’t going to tell me what to do, or to think that we know it all with respect in faith and morals, or to ignore our conscience, or our loved ones in family like our parents or even spouses. I’d never say a spouse is a “superior” but more of an “equal,” but if in a marriage a person isn’t listening to their spouse who loves them and is trying to help them, then it’s a pride problem. God gives us many people to guide us, that does not end when we move out of the house. May we seek these people out and heed them.

It’s also helpful to rejoice in the gifts of others - remember last week’s question from the vineyard owner, “are you envious?”

Related to that, we can remember it’s important to serve others; Jesus says the Son of man came to serve, not to be served. He washed the feet of others.

Contrition is also a big help. Can we admit that we are not perfect? How hard it can be to say, “I’m sorry” or “I made a mistake.” But when we do, it teaches so much; it shows

a child their parent is human; it shows a loved one that we care for them and are human, and teaches others that sanctity is always something we are growing at.

And lastly, remembering we do it all for the glory of God. Every little thing we do makes such a difference. The sacrifices for loved ones, the acts of charity and kindness, so many things we do aren't seen - and that is OK. But they make a difference to people and make this world a better place.

With a little bit of humility, we can come to our senses and know the vineyard owner loves us so much. So let us humble ourselves and come to Him, knowing that when we do, we will be greatly exalted by God, and can truly grow into the saints we aspire to become.

Have a blessed week,

Fr. Paul