



Apostles for Today

Reflection and Prayer - September 2007

Fundamental Rule 22 – Jesus, out of love, humbled himself

St. Vincent Pallotti writes:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, although without sin, dwelt among sinners as if one of them, and humbly submitted to public baptism at the hands of His holy precursor, thus inspiring us to lead a life of humility and penance. Out of love for our Lord Jesus Christ, we must curb our self-love and our pride, striving to humble ourselves, not only internally but also externally by acts of humility performed in accordance with our holy Constitutions (rule of life). Our community will never bear fruit for eternal life if we lack authentic internal and external humility.

(OCC III, p.51-52).

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. (Mt 5:11)

Reflection

Vincent Pallotti, as Jesus before him, admonishes us that the cost of discipleship is **humility**. Like the disciples, we often have to be reminded that we are called to serve, to adore, to give of ourselves generously and joyfully, even at the cost of life. Like the apostles, we are often tempted to look for success in numbers, property, power, position, influence, esteem, and recognition. But as Jesus had to remind His followers: “Learn from me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls” (Mat 11:29), Vincent Pallotti reminds us to be aware of inordinate self-love, of the greatest obstacle to holiness: **Pride**. Pride as hubris, attributes one’s talents, possessions, success, to one’s efforts alone, forgetting God, the giver of all good things. “In their pride the wicked do not seek Him; in all their thoughts there is no room for God” (Ps 10:4).

Humility is truth: it requires honesty and sincerity; thus some passages of Sacred Scripture liken the humble person to a little child,

whose natural spontaneity and acceptance of life is the antithesis of the often complicated adult with its many masks, hidden resentments, and prejudices. “Unless you become like a little child, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven” (Lk 18:17) ... “for the least among you is the greatest” (Lk 9:48). Genuine humility – feared by so many because they interpret it as unfair humiliation – is a most charming virtue. Everybody feels welcomed, affirmed, and accepted by those who respect them as being created in the image and likeness of God. A humble person is a modest person; he or she does not need to be the centre of attention. True humility requires that we esteem in ourselves and in others the many gifts God has bestowed upon us. We are called to acknowledge them to ourselves and others in the spirit of St. Paul who reminds us never to forget “that we may know the things that are given to us from God” (1Cor 2:12). True humility preserves us from the pain and bitterness of envy and jealousy, because it acknowledges and honours the good not only in oneself, but also in others, and recognizes the limits of one’s own talents, abilities, and authority.

In today’s world in which humility is often equated with weakness, and viewed as a hindrance to success, we need to guard against an erroneous idea of humility. This virtue -- so necessary for evangelization and unity -- does not require us to esteem the gifts and graces God has granted us less than similar gifts in others. Nor does it ask that we deny gifts which are superior to the gifts of someone else. But it obliges us to search for and acknowledge the gifts in others which we do not possess and to give them due credit and an opportunity to serve with those gifts. In Proverbs 9:10, we are taught: “the fruit of humility is the fear of the Lord.”

Pause for reflection.

The most striking human example and model of humility is Mary, our mother, the handmaid of the Lord. As the evangelist Luke has Mary say: “Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed” (Lk 1:48). Her yes to the will of God was the fruit of her trust in God’s abiding love. “Do whatever He tells you” (Jn 2:5). She spoke her yes at Cana, when she did not understand her son; yes was also her response at Nazareth, at Bethlehem, and on Calvary, when sorrow pierced her heart. May we implore her and pray with her:

Ant.: *My soul magnifies the Lord, for he has done great things for me.*

Psalm 62

In God alone there is rest for my soul,
from him comes my safety;
with him alone for my rock, my safety,
my fortress, I can never fall.
How many times will you come rushing at a man,
all of you, to bring him down
Like a wall already leaning over,
like a rampart undermined?
Deceit their sole intention,
their delight is to mislead;
with lies on their lips they bless aloud,
while cursing inwardly.
Rest in God alone, my soul!
He is the source of our hope;
with him alone for my rock, my safety.
My fortress, I can never fall;
Rest in God, my safety, my glory,
the rock of my strength.
In God I find shelter; rely on him,
people, at all times;
Unburden your hearts to him,
God is a shelter for us.
Ordinary men are only a passing shadow,
important men a delusion;
put both in the scales and up they go,
lighter than a puff of wind.
Put no reliance on extortion,
no empty hopes in robbery;
Though riches may increase,
keep your heart detached.
God has spoken once,
twice I have heard this:
It is for God to be strong
for you, Lord, to be loving;
and you yourself repay
us as his works deserve.

Glory be ...

Ant.: *My soul magnifies the Lord, for he has done great things for me.*

Our Father ...

Intercessions:

Lord, you resist the proud but are merciful to the humble

-- make us instruments of your love and mercy.

Lord, deliver us from pride

-- so that we learn to serve you in fidelity and truth.

Lord, make us meek and humble of heart

-- so that we might become instruments of your grace.

May Mary's example of trust and faithfulness

-- awaken in us a total reliance on Christ's promise.

Free us from the competitive and excessive belief in our own abilities

-- so that we proclaim your Word instead of our own.

Lord, make us remember that without your friendship and love we are but dust

-- so we turn to you in need for strength and courage.

Lord, open our hearts to receive the gift of truth

-- so that we might become credible disciples.

Lord, when they hurled insults at you, you did not retaliate,

-- let us be slow to justify ourselves and magnanimous in forgiving.

Prayer

Lord, you resist the proud
but are merciful to the humble.

Give us true humility
after the example of your only son.

Deliver us from pride
so that we may never know your silence.

Give us true humility
The virtue which obtains for us your grace.

We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

(Pallottine Community Prayers, p. 65-66)

Closing hymn