

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time, C – September 1, 2019 – Fr. Bryan W. Jerabek, J.C.L.
Cathedral of St. Paul, Birmingham, Ala. – 5pm Vigil, 8:30 & 11am Sunday Masses – 800 words

Our theological tradition holds that pride was at the root of the angels' rebellion, led by Lucifer, against God in the beginning; it also lay beneath Adam and Eve's sin. And we recall the saying, "pride goeth before the fall"; indeed, we all know pride, for we all struggle against it – or at least should! Pride is a vice, and the time-tested way to overcome any vicious tendency is to practice its corresponding virtue until we acquire it – that is, until we can live that virtue out with ease. Humility is the opposing virtue to the vice of pride. We must become more humble.

Our Lord frames humility in the context of social grace: everyone loves a humble person. It is not socially awkward to push a humble man higher; but it is embarrassing to tell a proud person to go lower. How many times have we been the ones who took the higher position with a sense of entitlement, or at least with the hope that others would tolerate it? Oh, but it's quite possible that some of you think you have never done that. But what about when you sin? "I'll do it my way – instead of God's". Yes, that is pride also. That is placing yourself higher.

Taking the way of humility is always, in every case, taking the way of imitation of Christ. He, the eternal Son of God, humbled himself far lower than we can fathom: he, the spiritual, perfect God, took on the weakness of human flesh, entering into the finitude of time, subjecting himself to this fallen world, and taking the punishment for its sin – our sin. There is no greater humility than this. Being humble is always being like Christ. Yet he was raised up by his Father; through his humility he was victorious; now he forever sits at the highest place.

But how can we acquire true humility? Everyone appreciates a humble person. But most of us can call out a fake, also. True humility starts with prayer. It begins with recognizing our need – our utter lack – before God. If we were left to ourselves we would seek out only our own interest, exalting ourselves, even at the expense of others. Guided by the Lord, however, we can learn to humbly put others before us, recognizing that God rewards and exalts the humble in a way that is greater than anything they could ever secure through their own efforts.

I intend to preach briefly this weekend, so I wish to conclude now with a prayer. You might look this litany up at home and see if you can pray it. The harder it is to pray, the more you may need to do so. And the more you fear this prayer, the greater you need to grow in humility. It's called the "Litany of Humility", written at the beginning of the 20th century by a Cardinal. I will pray it now, and invite you to unite your hearts with its petitions, as we seek from the Lord Jesus the grace of being truly humble, like him:

O Jesus! meek and humble of heart, hear me.
From the desire of being esteemed, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being loved, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being extolled, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being honored, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being praised, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being preferred to others, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being consulted, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being approved, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being humiliated, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being despised, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of suffering rebukes, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being calumniated, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being forgotten, deliver me, Jesus.

From the fear of being ridiculed, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being wronged, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being suspected, deliver me, Jesus.
That others may be loved more than I, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be esteemed more than I , Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That, in the opinion of the world, others may increase and I may decrease, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be chosen and I set aside, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be praised and I unnoticed, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be preferred to me in everything, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may become holier than I, provided that I may become as holy as I should, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.