

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Virtue of Humility

“O God, be merciful to me, the sinner” (Luke, 18:13)

Humility is one of the most important moral virtues, which is unfortunately often misunderstood. There are some who believe that a humble person is a weak individual; but actually, true humility is rather the characteristic of one who is brave and strong. Humility means that a person recognises that all the good he has comes from God, and that whatever defects he may have are due to his failure to correspond to God’s grace. Hence, he is convinced that he needs God’s help for all his projects; but he knows full well that God helps those who seek His aid.

The publican described in today’s Gospel was a model of humility. He knew full well that he was a sinner, yet he turned to God in a spirit of contrition with the assurance that he would be pardoned. And Our Lord tells us that this man returned to his home justified, with his soul restored to the grace of God. On the other hand, the Pharisee is a deplorable example of pride.

Every practical and fervent Catholic will try to cultivate the virtue of humility, even though the surroundings in which we live are not favourable to this virtue. For our present-day world contains many persons who are filled with pride. They feel that the little success they have won in the world is due to their own abilities. They are very much offended when anyone contradicts them or says anything that might dim their glory. Even when they pray, instead of asking God for His Help in all humility, they rather imitate the Pharisee and extol their own good deeds.

The Catholic who wishes to imitate in his own life, as far as possible, the virtues of our Divine Model, Jesus Christ, will necessarily be humble, for humility was one of the outstanding characteristics of Our Blessed Lord when He dwelt on earth. He requires His followers to practice this virtue, for He said: ***“Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart”*** (*Matthew, 11:29*). Although He was God, yet He lived a humble life, keeping in obscurity the supernatural gifts He enjoyed in full measure, so that we might be modest and reserved about any good qualities we think we possess.

Above all, He practised humility in the bitter hours of His passion, when He allowed Himself to be so gravely insulted, and yet uttered no remonstrance and inflicted no punishment on His persecutors.

Practical Application

Frequently remind yourself that all the success to which you have attained is really due to God’s goodness, and that He could, if He willed, withdraw it from you. Often thank God for the natural and supernatural favours He has bestowed on you. Thus you will cultivate humility.