

the sight of God I should possess any greater merit? Not in the least, for here all things are relative, and all must render according to that which they receive. The servant, who, having received only two talents, gained two talents more, was made in all things equal to him who had received five talents and gained five talents more. "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more" (Lk 12:48). This is true of all the gifts, both natural and supernatural, which God in His infinite wisdom bestows upon each one of his creatures. Let us never compare ourselves with others, or esteem ourselves above others, because we do not possess even the fragments of the knowledge, which we need to enable us to form an equitable judgment. Let us especially guard against despising anyone; the Pharisee in the parable despised the poor publican whom God blessed and exalted on account of his humility. The man whom you despise, the sinner you condemn, the woman from whom you shrink, may be, each and all, converted and become great saints. Let us detest, despise, and unhesitatingly condemn the evil, which is in them, even as we condemn it in ourselves; nothing is more just, more Christian, and more salutary; but let us ever distinguish between the sinner and the sin, and faithfully preserve Christian charity in deep humility.

"O Jesus, meek and humble of heart, grant to us a true humility!

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Pamphlet 171

## Humility

In one of the most beautiful passages of Scripture Our Lord Jesus declares that Christian perfection consists in understanding and practicing two words: humility and meekness. "Come to me," He says to us, "all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

What, therefore, is humility and what is meekness? Two excellent subjects for meditation.

Humility is a Christian virtue, which enables us to perceive our own misery and nothingness, and to render to God the glory and honor of all the good we do; it subdues our foolish pride, and teaches us never to exalt ourselves or to despise others.

Humility is a virtue, that is to say, a victory and a strength. We are all inclined, by reason of original sin, to pride, vanity, and vainglory. In order to repress this evil tendency, we need strength, and must wage a constant and untiring combat. This strength is no other than the virtue of humility.

Humility is a Christian virtue. The strength, which is bestowed on us in order to subdue our pride, comes to us from Jesus Christ, the only source of every grace. By baptism Jesus Our Savior establishes Himself in our soul as a king in His kingdom, as a master in His house; and he imparts to us the spirit of holiness to

communicate to us all His virtues, and, among others, His most holy and most perfect humility.

Jesus Christ is therefore, the first principle of the humility of His disciples; and the Holy Spirit, who unites us to Our Savior that we may be like Him, is the inexhaustible source of humility. By the sacrament of confirmation this divine Spirit communicates to us all the strength of Jesus, and thus bestows on us the most powerful means of triumphing over every vice, and especially over pride. This strength is nourished and increased by the Holy Eucharist and by constant prayer, and by these means alone can we possess the secret of perseverance in Christian humility.

Humility makes known to us what we truly are, and reveals to us our utter insignificance and unworthiness. In order that we may detest pride and resist it, Jesus Christ teaches us clearly that it is only foolishness and illusion. The proud man persuades himself that he is a most blameless and indeed an almost perfect character; he is full of self-complacence; he desires and seeks the good opinion of men, and is irritated and surprised if they fail to regard him with the same amount of esteem and admiration that he bestows so lavishly on himself. All these sentiments are false, contrary to the truth, and are only a lying illusion by which Satan, the father of lies, seeks to destroy our souls. By ourselves and of ourselves we are nothing, we have nothing, we can do nothing. All the good that is within us comes from Jesus Christ and belongs to Jesus Christ, even our very existence, of which He is the Creator, and

which depends solely on Him. The light, which is shed over the whole earth, comes from the sun; and belongs to the sun. Supposing that the earth could think and speak, what would you answer if it said to you, "Look at me, and see my splendor; this light is mine, it is my own possession, and all the honor and glory due to it are mine"? You would laugh in ridicule, and might in justice reply, "You are foolish and self-deceived as you are nothing more than a dark, dense, heavy mass; all the splendor that radiates from you, all the light that surrounds you, comes from the sun and belongs to the sun, yes, even the most feeble ray. Wait until night comes and you will be as dark as the deepest pit." And so it is with Jesus and every one of us. Jesus is the principle of all the good we possess, the source of all light, strength, and perfection, and we depend entirely upon Him. It is the Apostle St. Paul who asks, "What do you possess that you have not received? But if you have received it, why are you boasting as if you did not receive it?" (1 Cor. 4:7). Therefore, of ourselves and by ourselves we are nothing, and we merit nothing, no honor, no esteem, and no glory.

But we must go further, and must recognize by the light of humility that not only are we nothing of ourselves, but we are miserable sinners, worthy of punishment. Our sins come not from God, but entirely from ourselves, and sin being evil, despicable and deserving of punishment, it is quite natural that in our character of sinners we should be filled with shame and should sincerely despise ourselves, and acknowledge the perfect justice of the

punishments and humiliations, which God sends us from time to time. The Christian who loves his Savior delights to render Him the honor, which belongs to Him, and to annihilate himself in the divine Presence, acknowledging simply and peacefully that he is a poor sinner, and that he confides only in the love and mercy of God.

Humility is thus a pure act of divine love, and it is this, which constitutes excellence. Humility is the perfection of the love of God, just as meekness is the perfection of love for our neighbor, while both united are the perfection of a true love for ourselves. It may be easily understood how a Christian who is truly humble shrinks from seeking his own glory, and thus appropriating that which belongs to Jesus Christ. By humility we become imbued with a perfect sense of honor, as regards our relations both with God and men. As it is honorable, let me ask, to take and keep what belongs to another? All honor, praise, esteem, glory and greatness belongs to God alone, the author and principle of all good. Humility is truth and justice. It is, in the order of religion, just what justice and honor are in our relations with society and with our fellow man. Humility prevents us from exalting ourselves and despising others. Do we know the secrets of God, and the measure of grace, which every soul receives? I may presumptuously compare myself with my brother, and imagine that I am more devout, more charitable, more spiritual than he. I may perceive that my intellect is clearer, my memory stronger, and my judgment upon all occasions superior; but is this any reason that in reality and in