



## Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time August 29, 2010 C

### ◆ SOME THOUGHTS ON HUMILITY ◆ STS. MONICA AND AUGUSTINE — MOTHER/SON SAINTS

The opening verse of today's first reading exhorts us all to:

*"conduct your affairs with humility and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts. Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God."*

In the Gospel, Jesus proclaims:

*"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Spiritual masters tell us that *humility* is the *foundational* virtue of the spiritual life. It is the virtue on which all other virtues are built. Just as pride is often seen as the root of all sins, humility is seen as the root of all other virtues. St. Augustine, the great spiritual master, observed:

*"It was pride that caused the fall... If you ask me what are the ways of God, I would tell you that the first is humility, the second is humility and the third is humility."*

#### **What is humility?**

In his *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas Aquinas, the great medieval theologian, described *humility* as *seeing ourselves as God sees us. Humility means knowing that every good we have comes from God as pure, that we depend on him for everything.* The Little Flower, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, wrote: *"The beginning of all holiness is humbly admitting that without God we can do nothing, but that with, in and through him everything is possible."*

St. Teresa of Avila defined humility in one word: *truth.* Humility is accepting the truth about ourselves. This means accepting our *strengths, limitations and weaknesses, knowing, of course, that our strengths come from God. Denying either our strengths or limitations is a form of pride.*

A.A. spirituality is built on humility. A.A. people know that at the heart of their program is the humble and honest admission that they are powerless over their addiction and that God can and will grant them the power to overcome their struggle with addiction.

Humility is not thinking *badly* about yourself. It is thinking *less* about yourself. Humility is at work when we are the last thought on our minds. However, this does not mean neglecting appropriate self-care, such as a good night's sleep, proper diet and time for relaxation.

#### ***Humility - a practical virtue***

The virtue of humility has its practical side. Just think of the following:

- The *humble person* doesn't get upset if he/she is overlooked or not recognized.
- The *humble person* doesn't care that others get the credit for their work.
- The *humble person* has no problem accepting his/her need for help, be it God's help or human help.
- The *humble person* knows his/her limitations and weaknesses, and acts accordingly.
- The *humble person* doesn't have a problem accepting criticism or affirmation from others. After all, humility is truth and we should rejoice if others can help us to see our limitations and strengths.
- The *humble person* readily admits any wrongdoing and doesn't hesitate to ask for forgiveness.
- The *humble person* knows his/her strengths and offers to use them where they can benefit the community. •The *falsely* humble person doesn't recognize his/her strengths.
- The *humble person* is not concerned about his/her image before others.
- The *humble person* is comfortable with who he/she is and doesn't care much if that is not acceptable to other people. The *humble person* also seeks to improve and grow in maturity.

Talking about not worrying about what people think about us reminds me of the story of two senior citizens who were discussing about the wisdom and humility that come with age. One volunteered, "When I was young, I was very proud. I was constantly worrying about what other people thought about me. When I got older and wiser, I said to myself, 'I don't care what they think about me.' And now that I'm even older and wiser, I realize they weren't thinking about me at all."

A wonderful by-product of humility is the freedom to be who we truly are. Humility is indeed a wonderful virtue to cultivate. The practice of humility will make our lives and relationships much easier. Just think about it, when we can humbly admit wrongdoing, we pull the carpet from under the devil who wants to keep us stubborn and righteous and whose aim is to destroy our relationships. When we practice humility, we do not feel resentful whenever we are overlooked or slighted in some way. We should regularly pray for the grace of humility and be grateful for the opportunities that come our way to put it into action. A good one-liner prayer is:

*Jesus, meek and humble of heart,  
make my heart like unto thine.*

#### ***Mother and Son Saints—August 27 & 28***

This past Friday and Saturday were the feasts of St. Monica her son, St. Augustine, respectively. They lived in the fourth century.

Though Monica's parents were Christians, they gave her in marriage to a pagan, Patricius, who had a violent temper and was frequently unfaithful to his devout wife. Monica also had to cope with a cantankerous mother-in-law who lived in her home. Another cross this devout mother had to carry was dealing with her very bright but wayward son, Augustine.

For many years, Monica had prayed for the conversion of her husband, mother-in-law and son. Through her perseverance, God finally answered her prayers.

After drinking deeply of all that the world had to offer (including living with a mistress for several years), Augustine eventually gave his heart to God. In time he became a priest, bishop, great theologian and advocate for the poor. His most popular book is his *Confessions* from which the following famous quote is taken:

*"Too late have I loved you,  
O Beauty of ancient days, yet ever new!  
Too late have I loved you!  
And behold, you were within, and I abroad,  
and there I searched for you;  
I was deformed, plunging amid those fair forms,  
which you had made.  
You were with me, but I was not with you.  
Things held me far from you—  
things which, if they were not you, were not at all.  
You called and shouted, and burst my deafness.  
You flashed and shone, and scattered my blindness.  
You breathed odors and I drew in breath—  
and I pant for you.  
I tasted, and I hunger and thirst.  
You touched me, and I burned for your peace."*

Monica and Augustine are our friends in heaven. In particular situations, we may feel led to seek their prayers.

Have a blessed week,

