

25. April 2020

**Feast of St. Mark**  
**“Humility”**

*1 Pet 5, 5-14*

*In the same way, younger people, be subject to the elders. Humility towards one another must be the garment you all wear constantly, because God opposes the proud but accords his favour to the humble. Bow down, then, before the power of God now, so that he may raise you up in due time; unload all your burden on to him, since he is concerned about you. Keep sober and alert, because your enemy the devil is on the prowl like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand up to him, strong in faith and in the knowledge that it is the same kind of suffering that the community of your brothers throughout the world is undergoing. You will have to suffer only for a little while: the God of all grace who called you to eternal glory in Christ will restore you, he will confirm, strengthen and support you. His power lasts for ever and ever. Amen. I write these few words to you through Silvanus, who is a trustworthy brother, to encourage you and attest that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! Your sister in Babylon, who is with you among the chosen, sends you greetings; so does my son, Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ.*

Humility, trust, vigilance and resistance to the devil are the themes of today's reading for the Feast of Mark the Evangelist. We will focus our attention above all on humility!

We call humility a fundamental virtue, because without it the other virtues in our lives cannot develop properly, they are, so to speak, weakened and sickened by pride from within! This is very easy to understand when, for example, we strive for the virtue of justice, but at the same time we admire ourselves and emphasize our own actions in front of people to receive their praise. Then this virtue cannot really show itself in its beauty and value, because it is claimed by us and for our own honour!

*“God opposes the proud but accords his favour to the humble.”*

How can we now recognize the pride in us and practice humility?

Perhaps it is good, first of all, to understand the virtue of humility better, because often false ideas are associated with it! Humility does not mean any kind of lack of dignity, to be in bondage to other people, to become sneaky and to always think badly of oneself, or to live in constant fear to appear proud and to have scruples, to be insecure in everything one does, etc.

Humility simply means to place oneself under the Lord, to give Him priority in everything, to receive the gifts with thanks and praise from His hand, to serve Him with all one's heart, with all one's soul and with all our strength, to imitate His example!

Of course, this becomes a path, because on this path we encounter pride in its coarser and finer ramifications in our lives - the deeper we awaken in the love of God. Even if we begin to love humility as a virtue, this does not mean that we have already achieved it!

In any case, it is not so easy to practise humility as a virtue directly, even if there is some advice for it from the school of Carmel!

It is more the fruit of the authentic way of following Christ, in which we follow all the inner and outer guidance of God and overcome inner resistance with his grace!

When we encounter our pride, which is a form of self-exaltation, by taking ourselves too seriously, by putting the gaze on God in the background and ourselves in the foreground, it is important that we realize this! We have to notice when vain and complacent thoughts and feelings want to fill us and dominate us and influence our actions and words! The sincere question of whether we seek the glory of God or our own can become an inner touchstone to both recognize and correct ourselves with the help of the Lord!

A key to growing in humility is gratitude, both to God and to people! Gratitude releases the tension in one's own ego and opens the view for the actions of God and the actions of the other person and we learn to owe ourselves!

Similarly, humility grows as a fruit when we praise God, because here too, in the recognition and joy of God and his great deeds, the ego releases itself from its self-grasping!

An effective exercise in the path of humility is service to our neighbor, the more we are self-forgetful in it. The less we inwardly demand the gratitude of the other

person, the easier the beauty of humility can unfold! It grows the more easily the more we serve people who cannot give anything back to us!

Important in the school of humility is also the recognition of the good in the other person! This does not mean to idealize him or her, but to see what God is doing in him or her and how he or she is involved in it! If we would only stick to praising man, this would indicate that we are probably in a similar situation and that we do not attribute the cause of goodness to God!