



April 25th, 2023

Feast of St. Mark, the Evangelist  
Humility as a foundation

1Pe 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 favor 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 onto 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 forever 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 against the Devil... These are the themes of today's reading in honor of Saint Mark, the Evangelist. In this meditation, we will focus especially on the theme of humility.

We say humility is a "basic virtue" because without it the other virtues cannot adequately unfold in our lives, but will be weakened and infected from within by pride. This happens, for example, when we strive in practicing the virtue of justice, and at the same time admire ourselves and highlight our good deeds to other people to obtain their praise. Then, without humility, the virtue of justice cannot fully shine in all its beauty nor in its true value, because we will be using it to build our own honor.

*"God opposes the proud but accords his favor to the humble".*

Then, how can we confront arrogance in us and practice humility?

In the first instance, it's convenient we get to better know the virtue of humility, because we may sometimes have a wrong image of it. Humility does not mean, in any way, a lack of dignity; neither is it about submitting to other people with a servile spirit or being a puppet; neither to staring every hour only about what is negative in us; neither to living in constant fear of giving a prideful impression; neither about having scruples in everything we do; neither about being insecure, etc...

Humility simply means to submit ourselves to the Lord; give Him the first place in everything; to embrace from His hand all the gifts, with gratitude and praise; to serve Him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strengths; imitate His example...

Of course, it is necessary to walk a distance to conquer humility. In this process, we will find ourselves with pride and will discover in our inner-self its ramifications: first, the most evident ones and, as our love for God grows, also those that are more subtle. Although we begin to love humility as a virtue, this does not yet mean we have reached it.

Indeed, practicing the virtue of humility in a concrete way is not easy, despite, for example, there are some recommendations from the carmelite school. Humility in fact grows as a fruit of the authentic following of Christ, when in all circumstances, be they external or internal, we receive the guidance of God and overcome, with His grace, all the resistances that come up in our interior.

When we collide with our own pride, this manifests itself when we self-extol, when we consider ourselves very important, or when, instead of centering our sight on God, we are staring at ourselves; it's important to perceive these attitudes. We need to be aware when vain and self-complacent thoughts and feelings want to invade us, take hold of us, and influence our words and actions. The sincere self-questioning about if we are searching for the glory of God or our own glory can become the criterium to know ourselves better and to mend with the help of God.

Key to our growth in humility is gratitude, both with God and our fellow humans. Gratitude is our way out of that tense prison in our own "I" and opens our eyes to

recognize God's actions and our fellow humans. This way, we can recognize how much we have to thank others for...

At the same time, humility grows as a fruit when we praise and glorify God, because also here we are detaching from our stickiness to ourselves when recognizing and rejoicing in God and His great works.

Another way to train ourselves in humility is the service to our neighbor, which will be more effective the more we forget about ourselves. The less we interiorly demand gratitude from our neighbor for the service we are rendering, the more will shine the beauty of humility. Yes, humility has the best chance of growing when we serve those persons that cannot give us anything in exchange.

Another important aspect of the school of humility is to know how to recognize the good in our neighbor. This in no way means we idealize our neighbor, but instead see what God is working on him; and how he, at the same time collaborates in the works of God. If we stay only in praising the person, it is indicative that, probably, we may do the same with ourselves, instead of attributing everything good to God, as its last source.