

Thoughts on Humility

By Fr. Cajetan Mary da Bergamo

There is one kind of pride which is more abominable in the eyes of God than any other, and it is that, says Holy Writ, which belongs more especially to the poor. “A poor man that is proud My soul hateth.” [Ecclus xxv, 4] If the pride of one who is rich in merit, talents and virtues — treasures most precious to the soul — is displeasing to God, still more displeasing to Him will it be in one who has not these same motives for pride, but who on the contrary has every reason to be humble. And this, I fear, is the pride of which I am guilty.

I am poor in soul, without virtue or merit, full of iniquity and malice, and yet I esteem myself and love my own esteem so much that I am troubled if others do not esteem me also. I am truly a poor, proud, miserable creature; and the greater my poverty, the more my pride is detestable in the eyes of God. All this proceeds from not knowing myself. Grant, O my God, that I may say with the prophet: “I am the man that see my poverty.” [Lam. iii, 1] Make known unto me, O Lord, mine own wretchedness, that of myself I am nothing, know nothing, and possess nothing but my sins, and deserve nothing but Hell. I have received from Thee many graces, lights and inspirations, and much help, and yet with what ingratitude have I responded to Thy infinite goodness! Who more sinful, who more ungrateful, and who more wicked than I? The more Thou hast done for me, the more humble I ought to be, for I shall have to render unto Thee a most strict account of all Thy benefits: “And unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.” [Luke xii, 48] And yet the greater Thy goodness, the greater my pride. I blush with shame, and it is the knowledge of my pride that obliges me now to be humble.

It is easier to be humble in adversity than in prosperity, and it is impossible to say how much temporal happiness influences man to be proud. “They are not in the labor of men”; [Ps. lxxii, 5] thus the Prophet-King speaks of sinners, and adds: “Therefore pride hath held them fast.” [Ps. lxxii, 6]

Adversity counterbalances our self-love and prevents its growth, for on the one hand it makes known our frailties to us, the more so when it is unexpected and grievous, and on the other hand it compels us to turn our thoughts to God, implore His mercy, and humble ourselves under His hand, as did the prophet: “In my affliction I called on the Lord”; [Ps. xvii, 7] “And as one sorrowful so was I humbled.” [Ps. xxxiv, 14] Therefore, if we know not how to bear our tribulations with cheerfulness, let us at least endure them with patience and humility.

Oh, how precious are those humiliations by which we acquire, and learn to exercise, humility! It is then that we ought to exclaim with the psalmist, “Thou hast humbled the proud one, as one that is slain”; [Ps. lxxxviii, 11] or else, like King Nabuchodonosor when he came to his senses, and humbly exclaimed: “Therefore I do now praise and magnify and glorify the King of Heaven, because them that walk in pride He is able to abase.” [Dan. iv, 34] Afflictions are not wanting in this vale of tears, but there are few who know how to use them as a means of becoming humble. Grant of Thy mercy, O my God, that I may be amongst those few! [...] Purchase— From www.catholictradition.org