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# FOUNDATIONS

## *Humble Service*

**If you had one day to change anything about the world and the power to do so, what would you do?**

Like all of the virtues, humility is a thread in the tapestry of love (and love, I believe, is the best definition of the nature of God). These threads run through our faith giving it definition and texture. In the Foundation series, they illustrate our relationship with one another and with God. Sr. Linda Straub, in the first of these Foundations articles detailed the nature of love and our connectedness to God in it. Pride may allow some of us to say there is no God, but that same person, when asked, will not be able to deny the existence of Love. Our senses may not be able to measure the intangible presence of love yet when we witness it, we know it as a primary creative force in our world that elicits from us a response.

Pride, or greed, or anger, or laziness,...etc. may make our response inappropriate: distort our vision; dim our understanding; and justify our delay in responding. This unhealthy response can cause our intellect to deceive us with lies we accept as truth. We can tell ourselves that what we do does not really matter; that we are not rich and need not help those poorer than ourselves; or we are better than others because of our abilities, our use of time, or our possessions. Yet, are not all these the results of the efforts of many others and the gifts from God? It is humbling to think of facing God and accounting for the gifts and advantages we have received.

**By Brian Power**

Ted Turner is reputed to have said: "If I only had a little humility, I'd be perfect." In truth, humility is not one of those virtues you can brag about. And for all the lip service it receives on Sundays, it's not a very popular notion during the week. Humility is probably one of the more appreciated virtues to be found in others.

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**Brother Alonso carried bags and ran errands for others for 46 years. He set as his task to see Christ in every person who came to the door.**

In the second of the Foundations articles, Fr. Gary makes the distinction between healthy and unhealthy religion. Unhealthy religion tempts us to criticize instead of listen, to divide rather than unite, to deal in absolutes rather than risk seeing the gray areas that are so prevalent in our world and in our judgments. Humility allows us to see each judgment we make for what it really is. It allows us to fail and yet calls us to rise above our failures and inadequacies and continue trying. Humility calls us to compassionate service in order to heal our Church and our world.

Humility threads through the fabric of our lives and choices. In the third Foundations article, Cynthia Enghauser skillfully condenses the elements of making good Christian moral decisions. She closes her article with a plea for continuous lifelong formation of conscience through study, prayer, and practice. Humble service motivated by Love is a practice of unselfish behavior, as such it helps us to grow in the face of what otherwise can become a crushing burden. As we move into a “service economy”, we are provided many more opportunities to grow and refine our moral sense through service of others.



**St. Josephine Bakhita (1869 - 1947) Canonized in 2000 by Pope John Paul II for her life of humility and transformation through suffering.**

Spiritual growth is also at the basis of our Science and Faith Program, the topic of the fourth Foundations article. The Young Catholic Scholars Program is a community effort to help four of our science students on their personal journey of faith and growth. The experiences of these students will help our community grow as they acquire the wisdom of these blended disciplines.



“The word was made flesh, and dwelled among us” (John 1: 14) tells us that Jesus is the word of God. There is a lot to ponder in that sentence. Words imply communication; communication implies dialogue, and dialogue

implies relationship. Jesus calls us to be sons of God and heirs to the kingdom, like himself, words of God. We are God’s words and we cooperate with Him when we are alive in the Spirit. In the fifth installment of the Foundations series, Troy Woytek explains how we cooperate with God in his article on Natural Family Planning. Our openness to life is a humble response to God’s words. We need to be supportive and helpful in protecting and developing God’s words in our own families and in the families of others. Natural family planning is a way to cooperate with God and still recognize the restraints of our situation. It strengthens communication between a married couple and enriches their relationship. In this way God preserves the sanctity of life and strengthens the bond of marriage.

The last article of the Foundations series (at the time of this writing) also by Troy Woytek, is about Spiritual Direction. Taken in a Macro view, the entire Bible, the history of Salvation, is a journey of spiritual direction. We see Abraham, selected from all the peoples of all time because he is willing to accept the gift of faith. He is humbly dependant on God and trusting of God. The following history of the Jewish people from Abraham to Jesus shows God slowly but steadily preparing the nation for a life of loving and humble service. Pride, anger, avarice all take their toll and turn the nation away, but God brings them back, sometimes gently, sometimes sternly, in accordance with their ability to understand His love.

I have heard it explained that God is like a mother who is preparing to bake a cake. She has all the necessary ingredients and is sufficient to the task at hand when, her child comes in and asks, “Can I help”? In her love, she allows the child to participate, guiding the hand and controlling the process so that the result will be as planned. And, in the interim, the child learns, and grows, and knows love.

Humility is an integral part of childhood. A child, no matter how proud, knows his dependence upon the parent, and feels keenly the absence once distractions fade. It is the parent’s duty to direct the child to grow in virtue, and grace and knowledge in order to become an adult and take on the burden of humble service passed from his parents.

So, humility, and humble service, like all the virtues is woven through a successful and healthy life. Community helps round the rough edges off our personality and a community of faith helps us blend knowledge and virtue to develop a moral conscience. The object of which is to attain unity with God, who is Love. And the expression of Love is our service, our dialogue with those around us.

**St Gemma Galgani, known for her humility inspired Sts. Maximilian Kolbe, and Padre Pio**

Humility, especially in our culture, can be considered weakness. We delight in our competitiveness and self reliance, we compare ourselves to others to mark our progress and pride ourselves on our importance when we are able to control our surroundings.

This is a distortion, of course. Suggesting that we should be submissive, obedient, and humble are counter cultural notions to many. It is difficult to fit these notions into our lives... so much grey area... so many risks...so difficult to release control...so unlike those who are so sure that simple answers will solve complex problems.

How can we be humble and yet confident and strong? For examples on how to blend virtues and good moral values to the benefit of all we have the lives of the saints.

I have often wondered why Jesus’ death on the cross was the perfect example to us in the way to obtain saving grace, the perfect sacrifice.



Jesus could have redeemed us in any way He chose, and yet, He chose to live humbly and die obediently. He could have redeemed us by lifting His little finger; He could have become the greatest emperor the world would ever know.

Yet He chose to use the last day of His life washing the feet of His disciples, assuring us He will be with us, and accepting betrayal with love. In doing so, He left us a lifetime of spiritual lessons to contemplate and a perfect example of humble service. All else is distraction.

**Go Deeper**

For additional reading and eloquent examples of humility, go online and type the search terms: St. Alonso Rodriguez, Saint Josephine Bakhita, St. Francis of Asisi, St Gemma Galgani, or St. Anthony the Great With their example, and God’s grace, we will undoubtedly succeed in our continuing conversation of Love.

What can I gain from becoming humble?

Which of these saints speak most elequently to me?

How can I better imitate the example of Jesus’ last day?

Do I acknowledge love when I see it?



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