

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time: Mass Readings: August 31, 2025

First Reading - Sirach 3:17-3:18, 3:20, 3:28-3:29

My child, 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. What is too sublime for you, seek not, into things beyond your strength search not. The mind of a sage appreciates proverbs, and an attentive ear is the joy of the wise. Water quenches a flaming fire, and alms atone for sins.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 68:4-68:5, 68:6-68:7, 68:10-68:11 God, in your goodness, you have made a home for the poor.

Second Reading - Hebrews 12:18-12:19, 12:22-12:24a

Brothers and sisters: You have not approached that which could be touched and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness and storm and a trumpet blast and a voice speaking words such that those who heard begged that no message be further addressed to them. No, you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and countless angels in festal gathering, and the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.

Gospel - Luke 14:1, 14:7-14:14

On a sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully. He told a parable to those who had been invited, noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table. "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not recline at table in the place of honor. A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him, and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say, 'Give your place to this man,' and then you would proceed with embarrassment to take the lowest place. Rather, when you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you he may say, 'My friend, move up to a higher position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Then he said to the host who invited him, "When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

The readings for this Sunday are unusually singular in their unified message. Most often there are myriad aspects that could inspire focused reflection, but today, there is one message that is inescapable, and I'd be surprised if anyone going to Church today receives a more obscure one. The message is about humility and by association, pride.

As we know, pride is the deadly sin of inordinate or excessive self-love.¹ Humility, it's antidote. Pride inflates our ego, our sense of ourselves as superior in a way that disables our full and fruitful response to God's love which results in self-interested division between human beings. St. Thomas Aquinas states pride is unique among sins because "*in other sins man turns away from God, either through ignorance or through weakness... whereas pride denotes aversion from God simply through being unwilling to be subject to God and His rule.*"²

| Aspect | Explanation |
|---------------------|---|
| Root of all sin | Pride is described as <i>the beginning of sin</i> ; it is the first impulse that leads to rebellion against God (cf. Sirach 10:13). |
| Self-deification | It is an <i>idolatrous self-deification</i> that exalts the self to the place of God, closing the soul to divine grace. |
| Separation from God | The proud are <i>opposed by the Lord</i> and <i>refuse to submit to God's rule</i> (Prov 3:34; James 4:6). |
| Consequences | Pride leads to contempt, anger, inability to forgive, and the destruction of charity, ultimately producing all other vices. |

Humility restores us in the truth, that from the beginning we are dust and to dust we return.³ The First Reading provides us with three aspects of the kind of humility we ought to seek. First, humility admits that it doesn't know everything: Second, humility doesn't insist on doing things its own way - it stays open to other people's advice and ideas: Third, humility serves others instead of demanding to be served.

St. Benedict⁴, in his rule of life for the monks⁵, itemized 12 steps of the ladder of humility. St. Bernard of Clairvaux⁶ adapted these for the Cistercian monks and added the 12 steps of pride. It isn't difficult to imagine our lives being lived like climbing a ladder. It rings true for many of us with little to no reflection on how we live our lives. This isn't inherently negative. Especially if you think of the difference between climbing that ladder with a humble or prideful disposition. Climbing for self-satisfaction and success becoming excellent at excessive self-love or climbing for holiness and becoming excellent in your humanity as a child of God.

Sadly, the influence of the secular world corrupted with sin and infused with its consequences, forms most of us to be climbers on the ladder of pride. We have all sorts of sayings meant to stir our pride and motivate us to climb, no matter the cost.

| Source | Key Points |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| St. Thomas Aquinas (Summa Theologiae) | Pride is the <i>root of all vices</i> because it entails <i>refusal to be subject to God</i> and an <i>inflated sense of self-sufficiency</i> . |

¹ Pride is always contrary to the love of God, inasmuch as the proud man does not subject himself to the divine rule. Sometimes it is also contrary to the love of our neighbor; when, namely, a man also sets himself inordinately above his neighbor; and this again is a transgression of the Divine rule, which has established order among men, so that one ought to be subject to another. (ST, II-II, 162.5)

² ST, II-II, 162.7

³ Genesis 3:19

⁴ <https://www.saintbenedict.com/saint-benedict/>

⁵ https://www.solesmes.com/sites/default/files/upload/pdf/rule_of_st_benedict.pdf

⁶ <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-bernard-of-clairvaux/>

| Source | Key Points |
|---|---|
| St. Gregory the Great (as quoted by Aquinas) | The proud <i>boast of what they do not have</i> and <i>despise others</i> , thereby undermining fraternity. |
| John Chrysostom | Pride <i>begins with not knowing the Lord</i> ; it produces contempt, desire for power, and a refusal to accept divine humility. |
| Pope Francis (2024 General Audience) | Pride is the “ <i>queen of all vices</i> ” and the “ <i>absurd pretension to be like God</i> ”; the Lenten conversion must aim at <i>humility</i> . |
| Catholic Encyclopedia | Pride is a <i>species of contempt of God</i> ; even a “less atrocious” pride that merely overestimates personal merit is still gravely sinful when it harms others. |
| Original Sin & Humanae Vitae (Levering) | Adam’s fall is linked to <i>prideful desire for autonomous authority</i> ; humility is the proper <i>recognition of God’s gifts</i> . |

Some of us, are hard core get to the top climbers. Many try to find a compromise approach, while seeking the same fundamentally self-serving goals. Some just aren’t interested in climbing. I think climbing the ladder of humility, is structured inversely. Most of us aren’t really interested in climbing at all. Many of us will try to find a compromise approach with more humility than pride. Some of us are hard core climbers in pursuit of holiness.

Let’s be clear. Jesus doesn’t say, disavow any due honor we receive, nor does he say forget about happiness and success that might be accompanied by reward. That would be more like what a modern secular humanist might incorrectly interpret and try to impose on us. We cannot kill our desire for fulfillment, that would be to deny the truth of who we are. God designed us to seek fulfillment, although not in the things of this world and not according to the manner of this world. We should seek the true reward of lasting happiness that comes from living in friendship with God and leads to achieving our ultimate goal, eternal life with God. That means practicing the virtue of humility, since only the humble can have authentically human full and fruitful relationships, the most important of which is with God.

St. Vincent DePaul⁷ once said that “*humility is nothing but the truth, and pride is nothing but lying*” I think he must have been familiar with the writings of St. Bernard of Clairvaux who taught that “*there is nothing more effective, more adapted to the acquiring of humility, than to find out the truth about oneself. There must be no attempt at self-deception, but a facing up to one’s real self without flinching and turning aside ...How can he escape being genuinely humbled on acquiring this true self-knowledge...*” And, having possession of this virtue, Mother Teresa⁸ believed that “*If you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are. If you are blamed, you will not be discouraged. If they call you a saint, you will not put yourself on a pedestal.*” All of them learned from Scripture that Jesus wants us to glorify God with our lives by seeking holiness, and to do that, we must learn humility.

Humility isn’t one of the theological or cardinal virtues. However, it is connected to the virtue of temperance and is an essential human virtue that must be woven into the foundations of the life of a disciple of Christ. In fact, it is necessary for salvation, in the sense that there must be a degree of humility which allows us to recognize ourselves as we are, in need of a savior, and then to humbly receive the reconciliation in love that God offers through the sacrifice of Christ. It must be present to a degree, if we are to desire ongoing reconciliation with God and others after having committed sins. We must be sufficiently humble if we are to listen to Jesus and do what he asks. This is only the beginning; humility is the gateway to all virtue.

⁷ <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-of-the-day/saint-vincent-de-paul/>

⁸ <https://www.motherteresa.org/mother-teresa>

What is amazing about God's intimate care for us is that because of grace, love, and mercy, it takes very little to be freed from the curse of pride. In Psalm 8 it says, *"When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that you set in place—What is man that you are mindful of him, and a son of man that you care for him?"*.⁹ I'm reminded by those words of my own experience in an important moment of my conversion. Being humble wasn't how anyone who knew me in my adolescence and early adulthood would describe me. They might have said I was confident, arrogant, fearless, but definitely not humble! Although I didn't know at the time of this experience that the Holy Spirit was busy finding ways to draw me to the heart of Christ, this moment was a turning point, a moment when God decided to be much more direct. As I was enjoying the view of the cities below and beyond me from my vantage point in the Santa Monica Mountains, I was suddenly struck by the beauty. It was an especially clear night, and you could see for miles. But more than that, I was struck to the heart by a sense of my 'smallness' in the vastness of creation and the accomplishments of human beings. I wasn't immediately transformed, but the Holy Spirit had effectively booted open the door of my soul. It was a beginning.

Following the law of humility leads to interior peace, joy, wisdom, and a greater share in God's glory. That's what Christ wants for us: the more we grow in humility, the more we will experience those things. All of us want those things, so why aren't we all growing in humility? It's interesting that Ash Wednesday Masses and services are among, if not the, most attended of the year. There seems to be 'something' in us that draws us to the Church on that day. Some primordial truth we recognize about ourselves on that day. It might in fact be the one day of the year that masses of human beings across the globe forsake the facades fabricated by pride, in favor of a public proclamation of interior self-knowledge: I'm not God. I'm not as good as I know I ought to be. I'm not as loving, merciful, forgiving, or virtuous as I know I ought to be.

The rest of the year, believer and non-believer alike, we are overtaken by the lie that to be humble is to be weak, fearful, anxious, worried, insecure, self-conscious, etc., etc. We don't believe that we can have the lives we desire and be humble. We know God won't give us what we want, and we don't want what God desires to give. Humility comes with a price. But truth be told, being humble means having the only solid and lasting foundation for authentic self-esteem, peace, strength, security that we can have. The knowledge that our lives and our happiness are gifts from a God who knows us through and through and loves us unconditionally is really the only way to eliminate those interior struggles between flesh and spirit. Humble Christians are more active, courageous and adventurous than arrogant ones, because they know that they have nothing to lose - their life is completely in God's hands. Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Pope Saint John Paul II were both extremely humble, and yet they were full of life, vigor, creativity, and joy. They were hard core climbers on the ladder of humility, living life to the full, by turning away from darkness of excessive self-love and into the lightness of being in Christ the King.

When we embrace true humility, as exemplified in Jesus, beautiful fruits begin to grow in our souls. We are transformed; we become what we receive in the Eucharist. We live in the joy of being our true selves. We become holy, saints. We can summarize the fruits of humility in us:

- Life lived in the fullness of the theological virtue of faith – docility to God.
- Life lived in the fullness of the theological virtue of hope – having known, loved, and served God in this life, to be with God in eternal life
- Life lived in the fullness of the theological virtue of charity – in possession of deep abiding peace, that surpasses understanding.

⁹ Psalm 8:4-5

THE TWELVE STEPS OF HUMILITY¹⁰

12. Always to show the humility in one's heart, in one's bearing.
11. Speak few and reasonable words and with a moderate voice.
10. Not to be over-ready to laugh.
9. Know when to speak.
8. Love God by keeping the commandments.
7. To believe and admit that I am less than others in many things.
6. To confess and to believe that without grace I am unworthy and can do nothing good.
5. To confess one's sins.
4. To hold fast to patience amidst hard and rough things for the sake of obedience.
3. To submit to proper authority in all obedience.
2. Not to love one's own will.
1. In the holy fear of God to be constantly on the watch against sin.

THE DESCENDING STEPS OF PRIDE

1. Curiosity; when the eyes and the other senses attend to what is not one's concern.
2. Undue levity of mind, known by words that bespeak unreasonable joy and sadness.
3. Silly mirth, with over-much laughing.
4. Boasting and too much talking.
5. Singularity, proud esteem of one's own ways.
6. Self-assertion; believing one is holier than others.
7. Presumption: meddling with everything.
8. Defending one's sins.
9. Hypocritical confession, which can be tested by harsh reproof.
10. Rebellion against superiors and brethren.
11. Freedom in sinning.
12. The habit of sin.¹¹

¹⁰ <https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/catechism/615/>

¹¹ Bernard of Clairvaux, [*The Steps of Humility and Pride*](#), vol. 13A, Cistercian Fathers Series (Trappist, KY: Cistercian Publications, 1973), 26–27.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ash Wednesday:** A Christian holy day marking the beginning of Lent, characterized by the imposition of ashes on the forehead as a symbol of penitence, mortality, and humility.
- **Charity (Theological Virtue):** The theological virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.
- **Cistercian Monks:** A Roman Catholic monastic order of contemplative monks and nuns, originating from the Benedictine order, founded in 1098. St. Bernard of Clairvaux was a prominent figure.
- **Contempt:** The feeling that a person or a thing is beneath consideration, worthless, or deserving scorn; a consequence of pride.
- **Docility to God:** A willingness and readiness to be taught and guided by God, characteristic of a humble heart.
- **Eucharist:** The Christian ceremony commemorating the Last Supper, in which bread and wine are consecrated and consumed. Also referred to as Holy Communion.
- **Faith (Theological Virtue):** The theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that He has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because He is truth itself.
- **Grace:** The free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.
- **Holiness:** The state of being holy; a life dedicated to God and marked by moral and spiritual excellence.
- **Hope (Theological Virtue):** The theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.
- **Humanae Vitae:** An encyclical letter written by Pope Paul VI in 1968 concerning human life, marriage, and family planning. It touches on themes of human autonomy versus God's design.
- **Humility:** The virtue by which a person recognizes their own limitations, acknowledges their dependence on God, and is open to others; the antidote to pride.
- **Inordinate Self-Love:** Excessive or immoderate love of oneself, which is the defining characteristic of pride and leads to self-centeredness and division.
- **Original Sin:** The first sin committed by Adam and Eve, resulting in the fallen state of human nature and a tendency towards sin. It is often linked to prideful desire for autonomous authority.
- **Pharisees:** A member of an ancient Jewish sect, distinguished by strict observance of the traditional and written law, and commonly depicted in the Gospels as overly self-righteous.
- **Pride:** The deadly sin of inordinate or excessive self-love; an inflated sense of self-superiority that leads to rebellion against God and division among people.
- **Rule of St. Benedict:** A monastic rule written by St. Benedict of Nursia in the 6th century for monks, outlining a guide for communal life, prayer, and work, including the 12 steps of humility.
- **Self-Deification:** The act of exalting oneself to a godlike status, believing oneself to be superior or divine, thereby replacing God in one's life.
- **St. Bernard of Clairvaux:** A French abbot and a major leader in the reform of Benedictine monasticism, particularly the Cistercian order, in the 12th century. He adapted the steps of humility and added steps of pride.
- **St. Benedict of Nursia:** An Italian Christian saint, venerated in the Catholic Church, the founder of the Benedictine order, and author of the Rule of St. Benedict.
- **St. Thomas Aquinas:** An immensely influential philosopher, theologian, and Doctor of the Church, known for his *Summa Theologiae*, which systematically explored Catholic doctrine and philosophy.
- **St. Vincent DePaul:** A French Roman Catholic priest who dedicated himself to serving the poor, known for his charitable work and the founding of various congregations.
- **Temperance (Cardinal Virtue):** The cardinal virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It disposes us to master our appetites.
- **Theological Virtues:** Faith, hope, and charity; virtues that have God as their direct object and are infused into the soul by God's grace.

Humility and Pride - The Core Message

This briefing document synthesizes the main themes and most important ideas presented in the provided sources, focusing on the concepts of humility and pride. The sources, a written excerpt titled "22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time.pdf" and an audio homily "Homily-22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time.mp3," convey a remarkably unified message regarding these two virtues and vices.

I. The Singular Message: Humility and Pride

Both sources emphasize that the central theme is "humility and by association, pride." The homily explicitly states, "there's one message that's inescapable. And I'd really honestly be surprised if anyone going to church today receives a different message."

- **Pride: The Root of All Sin and Self-Interested Division**
- Pride is defined as "the deadly sin of inordinate or excessive self-love."
- St. Thomas Aquinas states pride is unique because it denotes "aversion from God simply through being unwilling to be subject to God and His rule."
- It "inflates our ego, our sense of ourselves as superior," disabling a "full and fruitful response to God's love."
- This leads to "self-interested division between human beings," making us "enemies of each other."
- The "22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time.pdf" further details pride as:
- The "beginning of sin" and the "first impulse that leads to rebellion against God." (cf. Sirach 10:13)
- "An idolatrous self-deification that exalts the self to the place of God, closing the soul to divine grace."
- Leading to "contempt, anger, inability to forgive, and the destruction of charity, ultimately producing all other vices."
- Pope Francis (2024 General Audience) calls pride the "queen of all vices" and the "absurd pretension to be like God."
- **Humility: The Antidote and Restorer of Truth**
- Humility is presented as the direct "antidote" to pride.
- It "restores us in the truth, that from the beginning we are dust and to dust we return." This truth extends to "how we ought to relate to each other in love and the truth about how we ought to live and build our lives and the world around us."
- St. Vincent DePaul is quoted: "humility is nothing but the truth, and pride is nothing but lying."
- St. Bernard of Clairvaux emphasizes that "there is nothing more effective, more adapted to the acquiring of humility, than to find out the truth about oneself... How can he escape being genuinely humbled on acquiring this true self-knowledge..."

II. Practical Aspects of Humility

The First Reading, as highlighted in both sources, provides three key aspects of the humility we should seek:

1. **Admits it doesn't know everything:** This involves a willingness to learn and recognize the limits of one's own knowledge, especially as one matures.
2. **Doesn't insist on doing things its own way:** It "stays open to other people's advice and ideas appropriately," testing them for truth without assuming one's own way is inherently superior.
3. **Serves others instead of demanding to be served:** This contrasts with the "foundationally prideful person" who is "much more demanding of others as though they have an inherent right." Humility, "so deeply intertwined with love, serves."

III. The Ladder of Humility and Pride

Both sources refer to the concept of climbing a ladder to illustrate the journey of life, highlighting the contrasting dispositions of humility and pride.

- **St. Benedict and St. Bernard of Clairvaux:** St. Benedict itemized "12 steps of the ladder of humility" in his rule for monks.

- St. Bernard of Clairvaux later adapted these and "added the 12 steps of pride." These steps are provided in detail in the "22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time.pdf."
- **Contrasting Dispositions:** Climbing "for self-satisfaction and success becoming excellent at excessive self-love" (pride).
- Climbing "for holiness and becoming excellent in your humanity as a child of God" (humility).
- **Secular Influence:** "Sadly, the influence of the secular world corrupted with sin and infused with its consequences, forms most of us to be climbers on the ladder of pride." This is evident in sayings that "stir our pride and motivate us to climb, no matter the cost."
- **The Inverted Ladder of Humility:** The homily suggests that most people "aren't really interested in climbing at all" the ladder of humility due to perceived costs and the need to change plans or give oneself fully to God. Many "try to find a compromise approach," while few are "hard core climbers in pursuit of holiness" on the ladder of humility.

IV. The Gospel Message: Humility and Exaltation

The Gospel reading from Luke reinforces the central message through Jesus' parable and teachings:

- **Choosing Places of Honor (Luke 14:7-11):** Jesus observes guests "choosing the places of honor at the table" and advises: "When you are invited, go and take the lowest place so that when the host comes to you, he may say, 'My friend, move up to a higher position.' Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."
- **Inviting the Vulnerable (Luke 14:12-14):** Jesus tells the host, "When you hold a lunch or your dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. Blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." This emphasizes selfless service and a disinterest in earthly recompense.

V. The Necessity and Fruits of Humility

Humility is presented as an essential virtue for a life of faith and salvation:

- **Gateway to Virtue:** Humility "is the gateway to all virtue."
- **Connection to Salvation:** It is "necessary for salvation, in the sense that there must be a degree of humility which allows us to recognize ourselves as we are, in need of a savior, and then to humbly receive the reconciliation in love that God offers through the sacrifice of Christ."
- **Authentic Self-Esteem and Peace:** "Being humble means having the only solid and lasting foundation for authentic self-esteem, peace, strength, security that we can have." This comes from knowing "our lives and our happiness are gifts from a God who knows us through and through and loves us unconditionally."
- **Fruits of Humility:** Embracing true humility leads to "beautiful fruits" and a transformed soul, including:
 - "Life lived in the fullness of the theological virtue of faith – docility to God."
 - "Life lived in the fullness of the theological virtue of hope – having known, loved, and served God in this life, to be with God in eternal life."
 - "Life lived in the fullness of the theological virtue of charity – in possession of deep abiding peace, that surpasses understanding."
- **Courage and Joy:** "Humble Christians are more active, courageous and adventurous than arrogant ones, because they know that they have nothing to lose - their life is completely in God's hands." Examples like Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II are cited as "extremely humble, and yet they were full of life, vigor, creativity, and joy."

VI. Recognizing Our "Smallness" and the Call to Holiness

Both sources touch upon the innate human recognition of our true nature and the call to a life of holiness.

- **Ash Wednesday:** Ash Wednesday Masses are highlighted as "among, if not the, most attended of the year." This is attributed to a "primordial truth we recognize about ourselves on that day," a "public proclamation of interior self-knowledge: I'm not God. I'm not as good as I know I ought to be."
- **Personal Conversion (Homily):** The speaker shares a personal experience in the Santa Monica Mountains where, despite a previously arrogant disposition, he was "struck to the heart by a sense of my 'smallness' in the vastness of creation." This moment "booted open the door of my soul" and was a "turning point" in his journey towards humility. He notes that "it takes very little to be freed from the curse of pride" through "grace, love, and mercy."
- **Hardcore Climbers for Holiness:** Jesus "calls every single person to be hardcore climbers in pursuit of holiness. Hardcore climbers on a ladder of humility in pursuit of holiness." This means prioritizing God and allowing blessings to follow, leading to an "excellent human being" who may also achieve worldly success.

VII. Key Takeaways

- **Pride is the fundamental obstacle to a relationship with God and others, stemming from excessive self-love and refusal to submit to divine rule.**
- **Humility is the essential virtue that restores truth, fosters authentic relationships, and opens the soul to God's grace.**
- **Practical humility involves acknowledging limitations, being open to others' ideas, and serving rather than demanding service.**
- **The path to true exaltation and lasting happiness lies in embracing humility, as exemplified by Jesus' teachings.**
- **Despite societal pressures that encourage pride, there is an innate human recognition of our "smallness" and a profound call to pursue holiness through humility.**