

## Conf 4 - Gentle and Humble of Heart

Humility is truth

Msgr Giussani's idea of freedom - affirm the fullness of reality

### **humility**

The fruits of a true and effective faith are self-control and love, its consummation God-given humility, the source and support of love. (St Gregory of Sinai, On Commandments #24, in Philokalia IV, 217)

### **gentleness**

The land of the gentle (cf. Ps. 37:11) is the kingdom of heaven. (St Gregory of Sinai On Commandments #47, Philokalia IV, 221)

### **humility and gentleness together (good fruits of humility)**

He who has taken humility as his bride is above all gentle, kind, full of compunction, sympathetic, calm, bright, compliant, inoffensive, wide awake, not indolent and (why say more?) free from passion; for the Lord remembered us in our humility, and delivered us from our enemies, and our passions and impurities. (St John Climacus, Ladder of Divine Ascent, Step 25, #10)

### **fear of the Lord (goes with gentleness)**

He who has come to know himself has obtained an understanding of the fear of the Lord; and he who has walked by the aid of this fear, has reached the door of love. (Ladder, Step 26, #29)

### **peace - tranquil harbor**

He who is hastening to that tranquil harbour of humility will never cease to do all that he can and will drive himself on by words and thoughts and afterthoughts and various means, by investigations and researches, and by his whole life, by prayers and supplication, meditating and reflection, and using all imaginable means until with God's help and by abiding in humiliations and the most despised conditions and by toils he delivers the ship of his soul from the ever-recurring storms of the sea of vainglory. For he who is delivered from this sin, is easily pardoned all the rest of his sins, like the publican in the Gospel. (Ladder, Step 25, #34)

**bad fruits of lack of humility**

Vanity(#8), calumny (#8), hypocrisy (#8), anger, harshness, judgment

SOME STEPS TOWARDS HUMILITY

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**A pathway - repentance, mourning, humility**

**Painstaking repentance, mourning cleansed of all impurity, and holy humility in beginners, are as different and distinct from each other as yeast and flour from bread. By open repentance the soul is broken and refined; it is brought to a certain unity, I will even say a commingling with God, by means of the water of genuine sorrow. Then, kindled by the fire of the Lord, blessed humility becomes bread and is made firm without the leaven of pride.** Therefore when this holy three-fold cord or, rather, heavenly rainbow, unites into one power and activity, it acquires its own effects and properties. And whatever you name as a sign of one of them, is a token also of another. And so I shall try to prove what I have just said by a brief demonstration. (Ladder, Step 25, #6)

The **first** and paramount property of this excellent and admirable trinity is the **acceptance of indignity with the greatest pleasure**, when the soul receives it with outstretched hands and welcomes it as something that **relieves and cauterizes diseases of the soul and great sins**. The **second** property is the loss of all bad temper, and modesty at its appeasement. The **third** and highest degree is a true distrust of one's good qualities and a constant desire to learn. (Ladder, Step 25, #7)

**[They come together in a unified Trinity]** - Repentance raises the fallen, mourning knocks at the gate of heaven, and holy humility opens it; but I affirm this and I worship Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity. (Ladder, Step 25, #15)

### **Contrition, Self-knowledge, Humility**

Contrition is one thing, self-knowledge is another, humility is another. (#38)

Contrition is the result of a fall. He who falls is crushed and stands in prayer without boldness but with praiseworthy persistence, as one who is shattered, steadying himself with the staff of hope and using it to drive off the dog of despair. (#39)

Self-knowledge is a true idea of one's spiritual growth and an unbroken remembrance of one's slightest sins. (#40)

Humility is the spiritual doctrine of Christ which is spiritually received in the closet of the soul by those who are counted worthy of it. It cannot be explained in visible words. (#41)

### **more pathways of humility**

The sinews of humility and its ways, but not its signs, are: poverty, hidden withdrawal from the world, concealment of wisdom, simplicity of speech, asking of alms, hiding of nobility, banishment of familiarity, putting chatter out of court. (Ladder, Step 25, #65)

### **Strive for (or at least admire) the heights; fail; reap the fruits of humility**

Know, beloved, that the valleys shall abound in wheat and spiritual fruit. This valley is a soul low and humble among the mountains, that is, it is filled with labours and virtues, and always remains unhaughty and steadfast. David did not say, 'I have fasted', 'I have kept vigil', or 'I have lain on the bare earth', but 'I humbled myself, and straightaway the Lord saved me.' (Ladder, Step 25, #14)

### **We can always exercise humility by admitting our weakness and this is the one thing that matters**

For he who is delivered from this sin [of vainglory], is easily pardoned all the rest of his sins, like the publican in the Gospel. (Ladder, Step 25, #34)

### **recall past sins, feel indebtedness to Christ's Passion** (Ladder, Step 25, #35)

### **can make demons into angels**

If the pride of some of the angels made them demons,2 no doubt humility can make angels out of demons. So those who have fallen may take courage! (Ladder, Step 25, #63)

### **raises worst sinners to heaven**

Humility is a heavenly siphon which from the abyss of sins can raise the soul to heaven. (Ladder, Step 25, #68)

### **Trees that bear fruit when limbs are bowed down**

"There are certain kinds of trees which never bear any fruit as long as their branches stay straight up, but if stones are hung on the branches to bend them down they begin to bear fruit. So it is with the soul. When it is humbled it begins to bear fruit, and the more fruit it bears the lowlier it becomes. So also the saints; the nearer they get to God, the more they see themselves as sinners." - (Dorotheos of Gaza, p. 98)

Truth about trees: “Young apple and pear trees commonly put too much energy into shoots. Coax such trees into bearing by tying down the branches. Once fruiting begins, the weight of the fruit will keep them down.” (<http://articles.latimes.com/1999/jun/12/home/hm-45662>)