

ST. JOSEMARIA INSTITUTE PODCAST

ENCOUNTERING CHRIST THROUGH HUMILITY

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. My Lord, and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me, that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence. I ask your pardon for my sins, and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My Immaculate Mother, Saint Joseph my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

With your permission, Lord Jesus Christ, truly present with us in the Blessed Sacrament. The topic of our conversation with Jesus is encountering him through the medium of humility. And we ask the Lord who is truly present since the Eucharistic presence is the best catechesis. St. Josemaria said that the greatest act of Jesus' humiliation is to be a prisoner behind that appearance of bread, for one simple reason, so that he could have an intimate relationship with all of us individually and serve us.

God has rigged up away so that we could have him all to ourselves. No lines, no tickets, no waiting rooms. And he is there, most of the time, without people adoring him, praising him. And he's there for us. When you're infinite love, you do these things that go beyond the realm of reason, not to contradict it, but go beyond it. And why is humility such a key virtue? Comes from the Greek word ultimately, which means "earth." "Dirt." Why is this a key virtue?

Well, let's look at God from the angle of the definition, the Apostle John gives. God is self-giving love. And you need the Greek word because there's a number of words for love in Greek as you may know. And I probably beat it to death. And to know God, we need to experience self-giving love, we need to love in a self-giving way. And that's a work of a lifetime. And to the degree that I'm released from the bondage of self-love, or that attachment to self-excellence, and we all have it, I hope I don't hurt feelings here. But we all have it. And it never completely dies.

We could whittle it away. We could shrink it a bit. But we have to be on top of that shrinking of this spiritual or moral malignant tumor that is called pride. We will have it and we need to put it through spiritual chemotherapy. I hope I'm not using wrong images. Or radiation therapy. We receive that, it's not that painful, but we receive that, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. That's where we get a major dose of spiritual chemotherapy that attacks that malignant tumor that is called pride.

St. Paul summarizes the whole gospel in his letter to the Philippians. And he summarizes Jesus' life. And he tells us that, let's see, let me find it here. Here it goes, "Have this in mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God," okay? Jesus is the Son of God. He's not two persons. He's one person. He is God the Son, with a divine nature. And now he's another nature, human nature. So, he, he's a man in every sense of the word. But he is a divine person. He's not a human person, if we're gonna be very precise, theologically, he's a divine person.

So, the person on the Cross is God. The person in that Eucharistic Host is God. The man taking a nap in the boat is God, all right, with a human nature. And so, Paul says that he left that divine nature aside, I

mean, he didn't focus on it, I don't know. Human vocabulary falls short of the mystery. "Have this in mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped." He didn't play that card. Okay, he didn't play the divine card, at least out explicitly. "But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant," a more precise translation is "a slave," took the form of a "slave." "Being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death." And so, Paul describes the life of Jesus as self-emptying. That's what self-giving love is. It's a self, it's emptying of self.

And part of our self-emptying is to whittle down that pride. And how do we do it? Lord, give me the help menu. And there's all sorts of forms of self-emptying and the more I self-empty and get detached from self and hack away at the selfishness, the more I experience Christ. It's that simple. Because I can only give myself when I own myself. And what is, what is pride? Well, I'm attached to, "My thoughts revolve around myself," okay, so what happens? Well, those thoughts militate against thinking about others. Or "I'm really, I'm a driven person. And grades mean a lot for me. So, that's where my passion is."

Okay. Well, if that's where my passion is, charity with others, service of others, prayer life is going to take a hit. "If I am," not a problem, "but if I give in to sensitivity, I could be prone to resentment, that can hold me back in forgiving, in centering my thoughts, and my conversations and my actions on the needs of people. Why? Well, because I'm kind of held back, these resentments are holding me down. And so, we have to look at pride as a big tree trunk and the branches are avarice, lust, laziness, anger, self-centeredness, self-absorption, etc.

All right. And this encounter with Jesus is this purification of this self-love and Our Lord is going to help us, and part of the process, it's not fun, okay, is this self-knowledge. I've got to know myself. And we all could say, you know, we say it at Mass every time we go to Mass, you know, we ask for forgiveness, we own up to our sinfulness. But there is a difference between, you know, saying we're sinners, and we kind of have to say that, you know, it'd be kind of awkward to say, "Well, I'm one of those lucky ones who's not a sinner you know, and you know, took a while but now I'm humble, so, I'm gonna move on to another virtue. I've got humility down pat here. So, let's see, maybe obedience: I need that virtue."

But those virtues like obedience and humility, docility, those are all part of being detached from myself so I can give of myself. So, let's look at, so, to imitate Our Lord, it's hard to imagine, he was just sheer self-giving love because there was no pride in him at all. And to imitate him, imitate his self-giving love and the more I do it, the more I encounter him because that's what he is. He's self-giving love. It's that simple. I need this humility. But what do I do? Well, let's look at this curious parable of the Pharisee and the Publican or the Publican and the Pharisee.

"He also told them this parable to some who trusted in themselves, that they were righteous and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus within himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like the other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, even like this tax collector.' Okay. "I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing afar off, will not even lift up his eyes to Heaven but beat his breast saying, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, the man, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

And so, what do we see here? The prayer of the Pharisee doesn't work. I mean, he's, he's pretty good. You'd almost say, "Well, he must go to one of those places, one of those centers of The Work, you know? You know, he's praying, you know, and he's living the Ten Commandments. And, you know, he's giving a little bit of money. And he does mortification, he must go to one of those centers of The Work. He's behaving himself. And Our Lord has a problem with the guy. And what's a little bit counterintuitive is that he praises pretty sinful people! I mean, this guy was a thief. He's a publican, he was a thief he may have, he may have taken somebody's life. He was lustful. He blasphemes. He's not a practicing Jew. And Our Lord said, "Okay, imitate this guy." Well, not his, not his track record, obviously. But this man, his prayer is effective.

And the other guy who is not in, least doesn't seem to be in serious sin, he's living the commandments, and he's praying, he's fasting, and Our Lord said, "This guy's going nowhere." And you think, well, maybe Our Lord was in a little bit of an open-minded mood when he told that parable. Maybe his liberal side came out, you know? But he's doing it all the time! You know, praising converted prostitutes, he's uh, this woman who, I don't know how many times, she married five times, the Samaritan woman and now she's living with a man now she's sort of an all-star. She brings the entire town. And you can tell, well, this woman is one of the starters on his team of evangelization. This, this woman has it right! And so, she becomes a heroine.

And so, you see these flawed people, a couple of days ago, we celebrated the feast of St. Paul. And I think that's where the saying, "Get off your high horse," he was on a high horse. And you know, he was pretty sinful, and now he becomes a great evangelizer. Now, what's going on? Well, I think we realize Our Lord is not saying, "Listen, have a sinful track record. So, you know, when you repent, I'll praise you to the skies." I don't think that's the right idea. You know, a Plan A is always better than Plan B. But once you're into Plan B, that could work in our favor. Plan A is a don't commit these serious sins. Plan B is, okay if you committed these serious sins, if you repent, you could be a great apostle. You know with Our Lord's merciful grace we could win either way. But we could lose by being very smug.

What was his problem? That there was one glaring virtue that this man did not live, this Pharisee, that he had no compassion. The Holy Father talks about extending the gospel to the periphery, doesn't mean geographic periphery. My buddy could be the periphery, my family member could be a periphery, a colleague at work or somebody I meet waiting in line to pay for shampoo could be on the periphery, okay? And if I am self-satisfied, and I have this holier-than-thou attitude, I can't evangelize. I remember a while ago, in a conversation, one person was thinking about coming back to the faith.

And we're three of us here talking, two priests, one layman, was the layman thinking about coming back to the faith. The young priest was just eloquently speaking about the faith. And the joys of being in the state of grace. And the bliss of having a good spiritual life. And how even suffering can be a blessing when you're centered on Christ. All great stuff. But the oils were still, they weren't dried from his ordination. They're still kind of moist. I would say to myself, "Son, good job!" You know? This person circled back and said to me, I don't know how to take it, he said, "You know, that young priest, he's really good. But he's so good, I don't know if I could open up to him because I don't want to shake his faith."

He said, he said this, "I know this sounds strange," he told me, he says, "but the guy's too good! And I'm not so hot. And I'm afraid he may not understand me, or I may shake him." I said, "Well, if you're that concerned, just try to inquire how many years the person's been ordained. And if it's over five years, I think you're safe, you know, in reality, if he's been ordained for at least a few weeks, I think you're safe. And so,

what do people need to see? Do I have to be a publican type to have this humility? No, but I need to realize if I'm into Plan A, okay, you know, "I come from a good family," you know, and that's the normal thing, I mean, it's not abnormal. "Hey, listen, you know, I'm a practicing Christian and I'm trying to, you know, follow Christ," that's eminently normal.

But I need to realize that I have these graces because of Our Lord, and I have to realize that on my own, I cannot grow. And that I have been eminently blessed. If, you know, I've been raised in a good family, if I've had the right kind of friends, if I've been raised in the faith, I am eminently blessed and I need to give it away, I need to give it to other people. But what I can't do is be satisfied with what I have and not try to give it away. That's pride. That's the holier-than-thou that we hear so often.

I was driving. And I was near the cathedral, I was meeting a priest friend. And I ran into three marches, okay, one major one. And then two minor ones. And I felt kind of, I felt bad. Because I know, they all mean well, and they're looking for meaning. But I was looking at them pastorally. If I were a doctor, I'd look at them clinically, if I was a psychologist, I would look at them psychologically, but I looked at them pastorally. And I felt bad. I said, "These people don't have Christ, Christ is not there. There's an absence of God." Don't need to get into detail. But so anti-life. And so, in a certain sense, anti-woman.

And I could see a march, you know, just praising and recognizing the dignity of women and the beauty of women and how they raise the moral tone and how formation of every human being is in the hands of women - comes from St. John Paul. But this, no. And I'm saying to myself, "Well, how do you, these confused people who mean well," you say, "Well, how do you know they mean well?" Well, listen, I want God to give me slack. So, I'm certainly gonna give them slack. They mean well. Confused. Would getting on a soapbox, you know, as they're marching, what would happen if one of us, I'm a man, let's say you, I'd get lynched, but one of you said, "Listen, ladies, you're not in the state of grace!" How would that land?

Or "Ladies, you're probably miserable, because God is not in your life!" How would that land? "What you need to do is go to a Church and go to confession!" You're eminently right, but that would, you would run the risk of being lynched as well. Or "Don't you know that an unborn child is a person!" You know, and so, you experience a little bit, or a lotta bit, of a modern ancient pagan Rome. So, what works? I need to see myself as a sinner who wants to be holy. And Paul, arguably the greatest evangelizer of that early Church, maybe the greatest evangelizer period, don't forget! he had a heightened awareness of his sinfulness. He was thrown off his horse, and he faced Our Lord. He was responsible for a lot of suffering, and even deaths, of the early Christians.

And Peter, another great evangelizer. All right, well what happened? Well, he denied Our Lord three times! I mean, he didn't need a meditation to remind him, "Don't be like the Pharisee." He could relate to the public. I mean, he did worse than the publican. And the sons of thunder who prayed to Our Lord, "Burn the whole town down." So, what do we see here? These, these all-stars, but they're really not all-stars. They're all stars because Christ is an all-star but they're not all-stars. They became all-stars because of their humility - because they recognized their sinfulness.

We have that Samaritan woman, you know? Well, she owned up to it. Says, "Yeah, even for a pagan, marrying five times and living with a guy is a bit much. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I'm not. I'm sorry. I repent." All right now she's a great evangelizer. Why is that? Because humility morphs into compassion. When I know Our Lord

has forgiven me, and when I know that I am sinful, and not to be scrupulous, or to wallow in self-pity, or low self-esteem, it's just the opposite, I have the highest self-esteem. As I release this stuff, Our Lord lives in me. Our Lord takes over more.

They see the compassionate, merciful face of Our Lord. This, this publican who's beating his breast and begging for mercy, I could open up to him a lot more than I'm gonna open up to the Pharisee. I mean, heck, you're fasting. I, you know, fasting is an irritant to me. And, you know, and you're living all the commandments, well, frankly, I'm not! Okay? So, publican, why don't you give me a little direction here? You, I can relate to you.

And what is Our Lord saying? And this is counterintuitive because sometimes we think, you know, the, I would say American mentality, but I think this would probably apply to everybody. Christianity is being, being holy means being a good performer. I would say that's not as accurate as saying, "Being holy is being a good *repenter*." It's, it's knowing myself and looking at Christ, because all these people, this humility, how did it happen? Well, they looked at him. And then they start to know themselves better. It wasn't it, wasn't an academic, "Hey, listen, you're a sinner. Let's analyze your ethical life." No, they looked at Our Lord and looked at themselves and said, "Lord, I'm sorry, and you're gonna have to help me because I'm sinful."

And that is the self-giving, the self-abnegation that leads to holiness. What could be a few resolutions here? Well, one resolution is to end the meditation because we're running out of time here. Maybe one question to ask myself here, because the Pharisee, it's a little hard to analyze this guy, but he's definitely in an internal comfort zone. He's not reaching out to anybody, he's very self-satisfied, there's no examination of conscience. The virtue of charity is not an issue. How much he's serving the needs of others is not an issue. How much he really loves God is not an issue; he's performing. He's fulfilling religious duties. And he's completely smug. And he's in an eternal comfort zone! Unless he comes to grips with himself, he's going to be stagnant. And he can't evangelize.

We can't evangelize, and that march is an icon or a paradigm of our society, both men and women. And if I'm going to make a dent in these kinds of people, I need that compassion of Christ, because that works. I need that affection of Our Lord that presupposes a lot of self-abnegation of pride, in different shapes and forms. And lastly, making a good confession is a great antidote to pride. One last thing: my younger days, well, probably my first week in the priesthood, when I was probably more scared than the penitents, I remember very distinctly my first bout in the confessional box, I was praying that no one come, and at first I said, "Well, you know, this is part of the price you pay for sinning, you got to say it, for us Catholics."

And I realized really quickly that it's the most merciful way of doing it. The human person needs this catharsis, this unburdening. And to really grow in humility, you have to do these kinds of things. Because one thing is confessing to God, which is valid, you should, but the other thing is confessing to God through the mediation of another person. It makes a big difference. The humility just skyrockets when you have another person there.

And you know, we all have that experience, that humility is definitely enhanced when we're honest with ourselves, Our Lord, and with the person who's taking the place of Our Lord. Well, we go to the Blessed Virgin Mary. And she says something very profound about humility. She says God has done great things through her humility. And we want to use this point in *The Way* to finish: "Another fall, and what a fall!"

Despair? No. Humble yourself and, through Mary, your Mother, have recourse to the merciful Love of Jesus. ‘Have mercy on me,’ and lift up your hearts. Now begin again.”

I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations you’ve communicated to me in this meditation. I ask your help in putting them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, Saint Joseph my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.



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