LEARN FROM ME FOR I AM MEEK AND LOWLY OF HEART...

Matthew 11:25-30

"Which is the feature that stands out most in the everyday behavior of the Pope (Benedict XVI)?" I ask his secretary Mons. Alfred Xuereb, our friend since the days when he worked at the Lateran University. "The meekness ... I've never seen this Pope lose his patience, raise his voice, or be aggressive ... not even in the most difficult and painful circumstances of his heavy ministry. Pope Benedict is very controlled, master of himself, polite and humane in the way he acts and in the way he speaks. In short, he is a meek and humble man."

Meekness is a virtue of which little is spoken. It is not to be identified with weakness, with deference, with resignation, with the renunciation of struggle; meekness wins the battles of life by choosing the path of non-violence, of detachment from the greed of wealth, of mortification of vainglory, separation from stubbornness and meanness. Meekness breaks the law of retaliation which says "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" which, if followed, would leave us all blind and toothless, as Gandhi used to teach.

By no coincidence does our Lord couple meekness with humility: you can't be meek if you are not humble.

Humility (from the Latin humus = earth) is a most appropriate virtue for man: to stand with your feet on the ground is the most natural, the most universal condition for man; no one is excluded, nobody is prevented from reaching the ground. But what is humility? Humility is not feeling small; this could simply mean lack of self-esteem or at least lack of a proper judgment of oneself. Humility is not even declaring oneself small; this would be identified with false humility and therefore would be pure pride. Humility consists in making oneself small. That is why Jesus was able to say "learn from me that I am meek and lowly of heart." Jesus made Himself little, He became one of us, He lowered Himself to our level. This is His humility. It is only when we are tall that we need to bow down. Jesus puts this verse "learn from me that I am meek and lowly of heart" in the context of his praise to God and as He encourages us to carry his yoke. Also He speaks to us who are weary and oppressed; well, nothing seems to make sense in these verses. Let us listen to them:

At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Jesus praises the Father because He is glad that He hides the secrets of His life from those who consider themselves wise: it is the same logic of the Magnificat, the song of Mary. “He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly." We must rediscover the beauty of making ourselves small, we have to admit our tiredness and desire to learn again. The enemy of our growth is our pride. It's wonderful to have the attitude of a disciple. How does a person learn generally? You follow a model, you go to school, and you practice by doing exercises. We must...
learn meekness and humility of heart from our Master Jesus. The heart is the center of the human person, the place of our decisions and the organ where all our feelings are conceived. Basically we must learn from Jesus the art of knowing how to choose thoughts, judgments, words and actions, and the ability to shape our emotional response to reality. There are many attitudes opposed to the virtue of humility: speaking and acting in order to impress and be praised by others; always wanting to be right, to never admit our mistakes; humiliating others in order to exalt ourselves; speaking highly of ourselves and our merits; exaggerating our good qualities and ignoring our weak points; forgetting that our talents are a gift from God; trying to dominate others; getting offended easily. I would like to dwell on two attitudes opposed to humility that are often overlooked: not assuming responsibility, and getting discouraged. Many people refuse to accept a task or a role of some significance because they think they aren’t capable — maybe they even declare publicly their inadequacy. This could lead them to think that they are humble; but in reality their humility is false, as seen both by the fact that they fear to fall short of what is required, and also the fact that they feel strongly offended if someone considers them unable to take on this commitment. As long as they criticize themselves everything is fine but God forbid if someone else points out their limitations. Discouragement is another indication of lack of humility because it means that we rely entirely on ourselves and do not put our trust and reliance in God. It is interesting that the Gospel passage analyzed here ends with the image of the yoke, and it says that His yoke is a source of comfort — how is this possible? The yoke is an implement of wood attached to the neck of a pair of oxen to allow them to pull a cart. To take His yoke means to join His mission without fearing what others think, experiencing in this way His freedom, pulling the cart together with Him. This way our duty is not only possible but is also light. I conclude with two tips to help learn and grow in the virtue of humility: constant and fervent prayer, and acceptance of humiliations of life. Many would love to be humble, but few tolerate humiliations. Yet just as study is the means to achieving knowledge, so too is humiliation the means to acquiring humility. St. Teresa of Avila teaches us: "I never heard people speak so badly about me as to not see at the same time that it was too little. If I was falsely accused over some point, I saw that I had offended the Lord in many others, and people did a great act of charity to not mention it. "Let us practice this virtue, for the peace and joy that will result are truly beautiful … and this is precisely our vocation.

"We do not know how tall we are until we are called to stand up" — Emily Dickinson

This month’s meditation was written by Sr. Tiziana.

This month’s resolution:

I will ask God for a humble heart and will try not to exalt myself if praised and not to be offended or saddened if I am despised or neglected.

Apostles of the Interior Life

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