



Vincentian Values & Vision  
Lifelong Learning Series

## The Virtue of Humility

“Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.”

- Philippians 2:5-8



"I praise God with all my heart for the disposition in which you tell me you now are. Nevertheless, I share the pain you are experiencing because you feel that you are doing nothing. Be thoroughly consoled, my dear Sister, by the thought that you are imitating the state in which the Son of God found Himself when, after leaving the temple where He had been working for the glory of God, He went with the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph to obey them. He thereby accomplished the will of God by toiling for many years at the humble tasks of a carpenter's shop. Yet He had come upon earth to labor for the salvation of the entire human race."



**St. Louise, Letter to Sr. Anne Hardemont on December 20, 1659. (L.642, p. 660)**

There are numerous examples of Jesus' attitude of humble service throughout the Scriptures. St. Louise makes an interesting reference to Jesus' humility when he obediently toiled in the carpenter's shop of his father, even though he would later become the savior of the world. It serves as a reminder to us that no menial tasks are below our station in life, as we certainly cannot claim to be about work more important than that of Jesus. Simple works of charity gain meaning and a certain dignity because Jesus himself did these.



"If I, therefore; the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it."

- John 13:14-17



"Nothing should keep me from humbling myself. For this, I have the example of Our Lord who had a legitimate interest in advancing His glory and in reminding His Apostles of their obligation to honor Him, yet He did not shrink from humbling Himself to the point of washing the feet of His Apostles immediately before His passion."

- St. Louise de Marillac

LES ŒUVRES DE MISÉRICORDE  
J'étais malade et vous m'avez visité (St-Math., xvi, 36.)



Louise de Marillac, Dameiselle Le Gras, pensait, soignait, consolait, instruisait les pauvres malades, leur rendait toutes sortes de services, les disposait à bien recevoir les sacrements et les ensevelissait après leur mort. (*Gobillon*.)

“Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity-- greedy, dishonest, adulterous-- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.’ But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’ I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself [herself] will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself [herself] will be exalted.” - Luke 18:10-14



Just as the title of the song goes, it truly is hard to be humble. "We invest much of our energy in defending the differences between people and groups of people. Thus, we define ourselves in ways that require us to maintain distance from one another. We are very protective of our "trophies". After all, who are we if we cannot proudly point to something special that sets us apart from others?" See Nouwen, et al, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life*, p. 19.





If we practice respect toward one another, then we will have a similar attitude to Christ's toward the poor and lowly. We will be willing to humble ourselves and associate with the lowly and despised. See Luke 15:2. "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." We have a place for the poor in our hearts and in our service.



## The Virtue of Humility

✚ Key Points: Christ's Humility, Humble Carpenter, Dignity in Simple Works, Washing of Feet, Parable of The Pharisee and The Tax Collector, Human Nature, Attitude of Christ Toward the Poor and Lowly

For further reflection and study:

[Spiritual Gems of Elizabeth Ann Seton: Humility](#)

