

## HUMILITY (through the eyes of a Christian)

There seems to be a great amount of confusion as to what "true humility" is, and how it applies to recovering addicts and alcoholics in twelve step programs. During the month of July many A.A. meetings either discuss, or read writings about humility.

"True humility" is the following:

1. Submitting to God and legitimate authority
2. Recognizing virtues and talents that others possess, particularly those that surpass one's own, and giving due honor and, when required, obedience
3. Recognizing the limits of one's talents, ability, or authority; and, not reaching for what is beyond one's grasp

Being a person of many years in the military and civilian life I have had the pleasure of getting to know many people. Of all that time I have only met one man that I ever even considered a truly humble person. His name is Patrick. I still am friends with him, and continue to learn many things from him. I can never seem to either grasp the true humility virtue myself, or witness it in people in our program of recovery, other than this one man. Patrick truly knows how influential and respected he is but even so, subjugates himself to others in the hope it will help them. Not because it would gain him a place in heaven, or be lauded amongst his peers, but because he actually cares for his fellow human. His wife cheated on him with his own brother and he had the grace to forgive them, and move on. He is also a deeply spiritual man, as well as quiet. He is truly a humble man; placing direct thought in any responses he may give a question. Here are Christian definitions of humility:

1. "A quality by which a person considering his own defects has a humble opinion of himself and willingly submits himself to God and to others for God's sake." (Catechism)
2. "A virtue by which a man knowing himself as he truly is, abases himself. Jesus Christ is the ultimate definition of Humility." (St. Barnard)
3. "The virtue of humility" that "consists in keeping oneself within one's own bounds, not reaching out to things above one, but submitting to one's superior" (St. Thomas Aquinas)

Humility is not needed to receive grace, but humility does act as a catalyst for it to occur. "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (Proverbs 3:34, 1Peter 5:5, James 4:6). Sobriety is a grace that God gives us. Grace is not something we receive because we deserve it. It is given to us because God loves us only. There are no strings attached except the daily reprieve we get contingent on our spiritual state.

Complete selflessness, as some may preach, is not humility, but a characteristic of perfection, and is not possible in us humans. Moses was the most humble man on the earth during his time. It is written in the Bible; "For Moses was a man exceeding meek above all men that dwelt upon earth" (Numbers 12:3). This was in the context of the story that Moses would not defend himself from the accusations of Mary, and Aaron because he was too humble to do so. God personally defended Moses and struck Mary with leprosy for seven days because they accused him falsely. Mary was restored through the request of Moses in her defense (the obvious act of forgiveness being the act of a truly humble man).

I see a great many people in A.A. meetings that extoll false humility by doing such things as wearing their chosen faith, or religion on their sleeve so that others will flock to their particular flavor of morality and character. Make no mistake, our individual faith can be talked about, however we have no right to put somebody else's down while we do it. St. Augustine wrote "If you believe what you like in the gospels, and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself". This is the opposite of humility, or if you will, pride. Some in A.A. also pride themselves on the graces they have been given in their recovery.

I have never witnessed any other organizations on earth having less humility as a whole than in the fellowship of A.A. I am in A.A. and I am no saint. We are all pees in a pod when it comes to lack of true personal humility. One reason is that anyone qualifying as a truly humble person would not be in A.A. because it is, by nature, a selfish program. This is the reason such a serious emphasis is placed on it in our steps. This is the virtue we need the most in our program of recovery because we lack it the most. We will never be like Moses, or even my friend Patrick, but we can make reasonable progress along God's path if we can undertake this new life being somewhat humble. After all it is progress, not perfection.

- *Anonymous* -