

Reflections

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The Humble Man Is not Nervous

Humility is an attitude which helps us to overcome the limitations and weaknesses in our lives. What is humility? Father Kentenich, Founder of the Schoenstatt Movement says: “Humility is the moral virtue by which man experiences himself as totally weak when he is separated from God and totally strong when he is submerged in God.” Humility is something very different from feelings or inferiority complexes; these are expressions of dejection or depression. Today, many suffer with these complexes and feelings, especially those persons with melancholic temperaments.

Humility as smallness and greatness

Humility contains two life sentiments which are apparently in opposition: smallness and greatness. Whoever only experiences his/her smallness will in the long run fall into an inferiority complex. On the contrary, whoever only experiences greatness will become proud and presumptuous. In Mary, the human being par excellence, there is the perfect equilibrium: within herself she feels small, but at the same time, she feels loved and exalted by God.

Humility as greatness is, then, to feel accepted, valued and loved by the Father. It is the resting in a “you” which gives me security. It is the experience which tranquilizes my heart and permits me to accept smallness and limitations without anxiety. I can feel loved and, therefore, great and important in the eyes of God.

Humility as smallness is to accept myself as a limited and sinful creature before the perfect and holy God. Thus St. Teresa can say that humility is truth. The authentic man finds himself well when he is truthful: it is the spontaneity of the person who has nothing to hide, it is the spontaneity of the child. Therefore, humility is not hiding one’s talents. The Biblical ideal of meekness is not the same as a lack of personality; patience is not cowardice and passivism; smallness and simplicity is not mediocrity. When Jesus speaks of those who are “afflicted and troubled” He is not referring to sick melancholy.....

If we do not get through this, we will never be free. On the contrary, it can easily become a psychological problem and even a physiological

Nerves

Therefore, Father Kentenich also says: “In general, the humble man is not nervous.” Or, expressed in another way: “If we are nervous – not when we have weak nerves, but when we really are nervous, - we have to analyze whether or not it is because we conclude that we are lacking humility in our life.”

In that sense, for Fr. Kentenich, smallness is “not thinking myself so important.” My person is not important, neither is my health, nor my honor, nor my work, nor my love, nor my misery. Everything which refers to my person is not important. I am only an instrument.

Very well then, who is important? Only God the Father is. We should give importance only to Him. He is the most transcendental person in our world. I only give importance to God’s work, the Kingdom of the Father. He does everything. I only help Him a little. The honor of what I am doing is not for me, it is For God. Not I, only God. “I must decrease and He must increase” (JN 3, 30), said St. John the Baptist.

If I do not give importance to myself and only give it to God the Father and His work, then He gives importance to me. The less importance I give to myself, the more I am important to Him. It is the mystery of authentic childlikeness: because I am small, I please God the Father; because I am small, therefore, I am great.

Here we understand another phrase of Father Kentenich: “You are the one who does the greatest works only in those who are the smallest and through those who are the smallest.”

Questions for reflection

1. Do I think of myself as a nervous person?
2. How do I relate my nervousness to a lack of humility?
3. What does the phrase “not to give myself importance” say to me?

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