

Three Kinds of Humility



1. **The first kind of humility:**

St. Ignatius tells us that this kind of humility is necessary for our eternal salvation. This is when I humble myself and obey the law of God in all things, so much so that even if I were made lord of all creation, or in order to save my life here on earth, I would not consent or deliberately commit a mortal sin. I choose to never do anything that would cut me off from God.

2. **The second kind of humility:**

This second kind of humility is more perfect than the first. This is when I am detached from all creatures and neither seek nor desire riches over poverty, honor over dishonor, or a long life rather than a short life, provided that in either circumstance I will equally promote the service of God and the salvation of my soul. In addition to this holy indifference, if I were made lord of all creation, or in order to save my life here on earth, I would not consent to commit a venial sin.

3. **The third kind of humility:**

This level of humility is the most perfect humility. Having achieved the first and second kinds of humility, whenever the glory and honor of the Lord would be equally served, in order to more fully imitate Christ our Lord:

“I desire and choose poverty with Christ poor, rather than riches; insults with Christ loaded with them, rather than honors; and I desire to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than be esteemed as wise and prudent in this world. So Christ was treated before me” (167).

I desire to be like Christ and with Christ in all things. This third kind of humility is based upon a true love for Christ; I desire to be *with Him* wherever He is even if it means poverty, insults, being despised and insulted. In *A Vacation With the Lord*, Thomas Green states that it is easy to love Christ when we are with Him in riches, honors, and esteem, but at these times our true motive of love is hard to discern because these are things that we naturally desire. Thomas Green states that a test to see if our love is true is if we still choose to be with Christ in poverty, dishonor, and humiliation. Then we have no need to doubt our true motives.

This third kind of humility is beyond what we can accomplish ourselves. Either we love Christ enough to want to be with Him regardless of the situation, or we do not. This level of humility is pure gift from the Father; we can desire it but we cannot make it happen. St. Ignatius says that if we desire this third kind of humility in order to better imitate and serve our Lord, then we should beg the Lord to choose us for this level of humility provided God will receive equal or greater praise and service because of it.

Humility is the cornerstone of prayer and the foundation of our relationship with God. We must also decrease so that Jesus can live within us more fully. Humility is allowing ourselves to be who we really are: children of God with our full weight on the Father. Everything we think, everything we are, all has to be given to us from the Father. He has to breathe life into us every second. Humility is to live out of the knowledge that the Father’s plan is perfect; He knows the way, and that is enough. He carries us. We are totally in His care at all times. The spiritual life is a walk with joy and deep freedom because we are so loved.

Adapted from *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, 165-168, and from our Mother Foundress’ Contemplative Spirituality album, “Becoming the Word”.