

40 Day Challenge: Week 5 - Humility and Living a Saintly Life (Metropolitan of Toronto Sotirios)

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Our theme for the fifth week of our 40 Day Challenge is Humility and Living a Saintly Life. After all, as Christians we are called to become holy; “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16).

Last week we wrote about the greatest virtue: love. A necessary ingredient, however, to cultivate authentic Christian love is humility. Just like bread without yeast will not rise, love without humility will remain only half-baked and not reach its full potential.

Have you ever thought about the relationship between love and humility? Have you ever considered the correlation between these two virtues?



Who had and showed the greatest love for humanity – towards the sick, the infirm,

and those in need? It was the God-man Jesus Christ, as testified by the many healings and miracles He performed.

But who also had and showed the greatest humility? Again, it was our Lord Jesus Christ. He took on flesh and became man, not for glory,* but for service. Christ even washed the feet of His disciples (John 13)! Have you ever stopped to think about this?

“And whoever of you desires to be first shall be servant of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:44-45).

God exalts the humble person. As we heard in the Gospel when the Triodion began on the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee: “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:14).

Not only does humility attract the grace of God, but it also attracts our fellow man. The truly humble person radiates love, which draws people in. St. Seraphim of Sarov says, “Acquire the spirit of peace and a thousand souls around you will be saved.”

Ask yourself: do you prefer to make company with a humble person, or with a proud and arrogant personality? Here, we should note that humility, or meekness, does not mean being naïve or weak. Let us recall the words of Christ: “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

Another example of humility and living a saintly life is Saint John of Climacus, who we commemorated today, the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent. St. John wrote the revered book *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, a most edifying text. It contains thirty steps (or rungs) directing the reader to holiness in Christ; although written for monastics, it has many enlightening lessons for lay people as well.

In Step 24 ‘On meekness, and simplicity...’ St. John writes: “In the hearts of the meek the Lord finds rest, but a turbulent soul is a seat of the devil.”

*Regarding His glory, in the Creed we read: And He will come again with glory to judge the living and dead. His kingdom shall have no end.