

Humility

Definition:

What is perfection?

- It is the depth of humility.

And what is humility?

- It is abandoning one's likings and acquiring tranquility.

Saint John el-Tababisi

Common Misconceptions about humility:

A humble person is one who:

- Head faces the floor at all times
- Never accepts praise
- Always talks negatively about oneself
- Cannot be successful in the world
- Cannot defend themselves when accused
- Etc...

Humility in our Church:

"A person who mentions his pitfalls and sins to humble himself, though this is very good, is not called a truly humble person. A humble person is he who comes nearer to humility and TRIES to reach it. A truly humble person does not need to convince himself or force his thoughts to have the feeling of humility or invent reasons for that. But it is natural that he counts himself normally as nothing."

(St Isaac the Syrian)

"Humility is not the mere outer appearance of a person, such as dressing in rough clothes, talking with a soft voice, or walking with a bowed head. Also it is not merely expressed by words a person repeats to others saying that he is a sinner, wicked and not worthy. Neither is it expressed by words one repeats to God declaring his triviality, humiliation, and spiritual poverty. Humility is the life one lives between himself and God, in which he feels he is nothing, even less than nothing, and whatever good or righteousness he has, is from God, and without God he is but dust, darkness and evil."

(The late Bishop Youannes)

Other references:

(Mark 9:35); (Sirach 5:2); (Matthew 11:29); (Philippians 2:5-7); (Isaiah 57:15); (Ephesians 4:1-2); (Colossians 3:12); and (Psalm 138:6).

Humility and Success

There is nothing wrong in wanting to succeed. Success does not contradict humility. The point is do I get the credit for myself or do I give it to God. Is it me who is smart, and successful or is it God who has bestowed these gifts upon me? Humility means to have a humble opinion of one's self; lowliness of mind. If someone praises you, direct that praise to the Lord who gives us in abundance and thus you will not lose all your heavenly reward.

Is it wrong to "defend" myself when I am yelled at, blamed, or punished wrongfully or unnecessarily by others including my head servants and my parents? Does it go against humility to share my ideas and knowledge before others in, for example, a spiritual meeting, church discussion, or gathering of friends?

It is not wrong to defend yourself in a righteous, spiritual way, without offending or criticizing others. There is a difference between defending ourselves and telling others their mistakes. In defending myself, I should not be seeking personal glory, challenging or intimidating others. True humbleness is having enough courage to admit it when I am wrong.

Regarding leading others in various organizational activities, if I feel that this is a gift from God, then it is not against humbleness. I should talk to the leaders, and ask them if I could serve in this area. If they agree I can then start to serve; but if they do not; I should respect their decision without being offended.

In sharing my opinion, I need to ask myself: is it for the glory of God, or to show off my knowledge? Also do I submit to the decision of the group, or am I stubborn, and insisting on my opinion? The answer to these questions will reveal to me whether I am prideful or humble.

Saintly eg of true humility:

A nun was once approached by a person who said to her “you are a great woman, loved by everyone, full of spiritual virtues and the Spirit of God, you perform miracles, cast out demons, pray at all times...etc” The humble nun replied “I am what I am” and walked away.

Discuss... making a point that

- the nun did not ‘deny’ these traits which God granted her (as some people do, by denying the facts while looking at the ground and speaking in a soft voice to ‘pretend’ that they are taking the role of humility)
- But instead she acknowledges the praises and she would more than likely be secretly thanking the Lord for the blessings He has given her
- Reflecting the praise received by man towards God who is deserving of all praise
- Etc.