



Matthew 23: 1-12

Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have people call them rabbi. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father-- the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Introductory Prayer: Lord, though I cannot see you with my eyes, I believe you are present to me now, in my innermost being, and that you know me far better than I know myself. I also know that you love me much more than I love my own self. Thank you for loving and watching over me, though I don't deserve your love. In return, I offer you my sorrow for my sins and my hopes to love you more each day.

Petition: Lord, help me to be humble like you.

1. Disinterested Charity: How do we know that we are truly working for God? When we are willing to work for him for nothing. God calls some missionaries to work with the poor, who can repay their benefactors with nothing more than smiles and gratitude. Other missionaries work with the humanly and spiritually poor, who neither recognize their neediness nor value the work of Christian evangelization. Parents put in long, hidden hours of service to sustain their families, often without receiving a simple “thank you.” Christ shunned human recognition not just with his words: when the people wanted to make him king, he hurried off to proclaim the Good News somewhere else. Do I value my charity towards others more than I value any position of authority? Do I seek the praise of others for the good deeds I do?

2. Little Misunderstandings: Christian authority comes not from titles or positions, but from our faithful adherence to Christ's commandment of charity and service. We should welcome misunderstanding in the face of our doing good. It means that God is inviting us to attain a higher level in our charity and Christian leadership. With his fidelity, Christ shows us that we have every reason to believe in the fulfillment of God's promise. The book of Wisdom shows us that misunderstanding is part of God's plan: "He calls blest the destiny of the just and boasts that God is his Father. Let us see whether his words be true; let us find out what will happen to him. For if the just one be the son of God, he will defend him and deliver him from the hand of his foes. With revilement and torture let us put him to the test that we may have proof of his gentleness and try his patience. Let us condemn him to a shameful death; for according to his own words, God will take care of him" (Wisdom 2: 16-20).

3. The Cross is Our Claim to Glory: "And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (John 12:32). Christ did not lift himself up for others to notice; he refused to exalt himself. He refused the places of honor at banquets (he sat with the tax collectors), seats of honor in synagogues (they threw him out), and special greetings in marketplaces ("Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (Mark 10:18)). His silence infuriated Pilate: "Do you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you and I have power to crucify you?" (John 19:10). They asked Christ to exalt himself by coming down from the cross, and he refused. This is the real test of our trust and love: trusting that God really cares for us when he allows us to be crucified for being faithful, and loving that crucifixion by embracing it willingly for the good of souls.

Conversation with Christ: Dear Jesus, I know I will never be able to be as humble as you, but I want to desire and work for the greatest degree of humility possible for me. I want to leave behind the pride that has damaged so many areas of my life. I want to have your example always fresh in my mind so that I can keep advancing—not in order to glory in my own perfection, but in order to please you and do your will.

Resolution: I will think of the relationship in my life where my pride is most destructive. I will take concrete steps to deal with that person more positively and humbly.