

## Conference: Steps of Humility: steps 3, 4 (RB 5)

Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009 – Sue Eastes

**Props:** easel, newsprint, marker masking tape

### Intro

Last week, in 1<sup>st</sup> 2 steps of humility – focused on our relationship w/*God* (recognizing presence of G & accepting will of God)

This week – focuses on our relationship w/*others*

- In coming to spiritual adulthood by accepting wisdom & gifts of others for spiritual direction
- In persevering in obedience to spiritual direction

Benedict – steps of humility are like rungs of ladder from earth to heaven (think of Jacob's ladder story in Genesis 28:12)

Many medieval spiritual writers have used this ladder image in their writings

In earlier centuries, focus was on getting to heaven – but contemporary, incarnational theology leads us to focus on *this* life as well, & discovering the K of G NOW

“incarnational theology” → because God became human & lived on this earth, then that made this earth & all that is in it sacred & holy (vs. dirty, not worthy of being holy); hence, earth, as well as heaven, is infused w/presence of God, & is sacred & holy

Note: many, today, are only focused on “getting to heaven” after we die; incarnational theology means that the journey (on earth) is also worthwhile; the Kingdom of God is present on earth, as well as in heaven

In other words, the ladder image of the path to God is well & good – but we don't want to lose sight of what Jesus did for us in the Incarnation; Jesus sanctified this earthly life

Living the steps of humility – will not only help *us* in seeking God – but, also, will help *others* who come in contact w/us to discover God in *their* lives – when we live w/humility in *our* lives

### 3<sup>rd</sup> step of humility:

Read 3<sup>rd</sup> step (RB5, p. 66) – underlined ‘til “imitating J.C.” → **submit to prioress/abbot**

Qualify “submit”:

- not to just anyone, but someone w/*qualities* of prioress/abbot
- review those qualities (RB2, p 36<sup>+</sup>) → use **easel**
  - .. to hold place of Christ in community = be a Christ figure
  - .. to be simple, unassuming, immersed in God, loving the marginalized
  - .. to be doer of Gospel, beacon to strong,
  - .. to direct w/law of God, not brute force

.. to be a catalyst for spiritual growth of individuals  
etc.

- it is people w/*these* qualities that we are to submit to

Q: what kinds of people in *our* lives can we submit to? (**easel**)

In obedience we are to submit – not “blind” or unthinking obedience – but prayerfully & carefully thought out

Why? For the love of God (this is our primary love) – remember, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself”. (Luke 10:27)

This may help us to understand that Benedict intends for us not to submit blindly to *everyone* ...

But, to submit, w/perseverance, to those who have *qualities* of prioress/abbot

For, it is people w/those qualities – who can lead us to God

At any given point of time in our lives, someone may utter powerful words of spiritual wisdom to us – it behooves us to listen carefully

People in our lives *do* have great wisdom – even if you, or they, don’t realize it at the time

#### **4<sup>th</sup> step of humility:**

Read 4<sup>th</sup> step (p. 67-68, RB5)

Obedience under difficult circumstances → suffering & endurance = perseverance

Notice how this 4<sup>th</sup> step of humility is right next to the 3<sup>rd</sup>, where we are to submit to the prioress or abbot

I believe that Benedict intended the link between steps 3 & 4 of submitting w/perseverance, to someone other than ourselves

To exercise humility, we will come face-to-face w/our own struggle for power, as we face an authority outside of ourselves

There *are* times when we want to claim the power to submit or not – instead of listening to someone’s voice & considering it to be the voice of God thru that person

We need to put down need for personal power – in order to hear & gain wisdom from power in others

Don’t be proud! – others *do* have something to say to us, that can lead us to Christ-like living

To bear difficult things well, is fulfilling G’s command to “turn other cheek” – calls for great spiritual maturity

Once we have spiritual maturity, we *may* be able to better discern the voice of Christ thru others with this question: “**Does this voice seek to give us life, or to diminish us?**”

For the intent of both of these steps:<sup>(1)</sup> to submit to prioress or abbot, or <sup>(2)</sup> to open our hearts to quietly embrace spiritual direction with perseverance ...

Is to open our hearts to the one who speaks the voice of God to us

That is the key: the one who is worthy of being submitted to – is the one who speaks the voice of God to us

It is important, according to Benedict, to learn to submit, even when we don't want to hear it – for sake of drawing closer to God

But, if we look at who speaks to us – as being used by God to get us to sit up & take notice ...

Then, we can grow in spiritual maturity if we ask ourselves:

- (1) Where is truth in that comment? &
- (2) How would obedience to that statement help me to grow in likeness of Christ?

For, that's who Benedict wrote his rule for – those who are seeking God by growing into likeness of Christ

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Chittister says: “humility lies in learning to listen to the words, directions, insights, of the one who is the voice of Christ for me *now*”  
Q: “who is the voice of Christ for *you* now?”
2. Can you discern the voice of one who gives you life (vs. voice that diminishes you)?
3. Who might possess qualities of abbot/prioress in your life?
4. What might be examples of difficult situations – under which we might need to persevere under words of person who is voice of Christ for you?
5. Any discussion questions on worksheet to talk about?
6. Any underlining in book (Ch. 3) to talk about? What did you underline, & why?