

CONCERNING HUMILITY

—by Saint Nektarios—

Humility! What a magnificent virtue! It is an elevating power, the source of all good things, and a solid foundation for all the virtues. It serves as a guide toward moral exaltation, a ladder leading to ethical perfection, and a means of befriending God. It is the starting point of self-knowledge, and the end state of true knowledge of God.

Indeed, humility elevates to great heights! It is extremely honorable; it is an extraordinary distinction. Humility is truly the mother, the nurturer, the root, and the core of all good things. Without humility, we are repulsive, impure, and unclean in the eyes of God.

Humility is the foundation of our philosophy that securely teaches the lofty truths concerning God and the world; for humility leads us to faith in God. If humility is not first laid as the foundation of our ethical edifice, but, instead, we attempt to erect a myriad of good things upon pridefulness (whether they are alms, prayers, fasting, or any other virtues), everything is built in vain and will undoubtedly collapse just as a home that is built upon the sand, according to the words of the Gospel. Because there is no accomplishment, not even one, that is not in need of humility. Nothing can remain standing without humility. Everything—including chastity, virginity, non-possessiveness, and all other virtues—everything is deemed unclean and repulsive in the absence of humility.

Saint Ambrose notes, “The more a soul humbles itself, the more capable it becomes of receiving Divine Grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.”

The wise Sirach advises: **“The greater you are, all the more humble yourself, and you will find grace from the Lord” (WSir. 3:18).**

Truly humble is not the person who has no reason to be prideful, but the person who possesses virtues and has reasons to think highly of himself, and yet is not prideful about these; the person who on account of

self-awareness remains humble-minded. Such a person possesses true humility.

True humility is this: when a person has fame and prominence and yet humbles himself. The divine Saint John Chrysostom states: “This is humility: when someone has reasons to be proud and yet restrains himself, humbles himself, and remains modest. When a sinful person considers himself a sinner, this is not humility.” And again: “Humility is the lowering of the mindset. Humility is to bear ridicule from others, to have awareness of our sins, to accept accusations. He who has a high opinion of himself has been blinded and will fall into the hands of the devil.”

Saint Basil the Great says: “Blessed is he who has acquired the virtue of humility and who does not think highly of himself, even though he has a high-ranking position.”

Saint Makarios confirms: “He who has an exalted way of life, and yet has a humble opinion of himself is blessed. The humble person can never fall. How can such a person be at risk of falling when he has placed himself beneath everyone else?”

Saint John Chrysostom adds: “This is humility: to stand tall on account of great achievements, but to remain humble in the mind... What is the source of virtue? Humility.”

Truly, blessed are they who possess humility! For it is written: “**The Lord opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble**” (James 4:6).