

When he hosted high-ranking guests, former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt was fond of taking them on evening walks on the grounds of the White House. Without doubt, he would point skyward and recite, “That is the Spiral Galaxy of Andromeda. It is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It is 2,500,000 light-years away. It consists of one hundred billion suns, many larger than our own sun.” Then, after a brief silence, Roosevelt would grin and say, “Now I think we are small enough. Let’s go in”¹

Roosevelt, as portrayed in this example, was aware that in order for people to work together effectively and for truth to prevail, they needed a certain perspective regarding their position in the grand scheme of things. He realized that self-importance, or a lack of the truthfulness we call humility, militates against personal growth and interpersonal exchanges.

When Augustine, bishop of Hippo — was first converted to Christ in 387, he was happy to share his experience with others. One of his wisest recommendations was this: “For those who would learn God’s ways, humility is the first thing, humility is the second thing and humility is the third.” Augustine had learned (but not without difficulty and struggle) the truth for which every sincere believer searches, and from which at times we also run: God is all in all, and without God I am nothing. With God, however, I shine as brightly as any star.

The first reading and the gospel for today talks about humility and the need to be humble in our lives and I am sure that many homilies that will be given this weekend will expand on that subject. They may speak about conducting your affairs with humility, and the more you humble yourself the greater you are, and you will find favor with God.

We all have heard this for many years and it's not a bad thing to be reminded of because we do tend to forget. It must be important because it takes 2 readings and about 14 verses to try to get that message across.

But scripture has a funny way of revealing itself to each of us in a different way as the Spirit sees fit to do His work. Out of all the readings for this weekend, out of all the verses and words in all those readings 8 words jumped out at me and caught my attention. They were "My friend, move up to a higher position." This is what our struggle with humility brings us too. A calling from God through the Spirit to get us into action, into activity that will allow the Spirit to use us to spread the Good News.

It is this calling up that asks us to not only to move out of these benches, out these doors to a hurting world but to also welcome that hurting world to come in these doors and into these benches to join us in worship. Doing acts of random kindness is a call to action. Helping at Saint Vincent De Paul or any other charitable organization is a way of humbling ones self for the betterment of others.

1st Corinthians states "To each individual the manifestation (or gift or talent) of the Spirit is given for some benefit." The apostle Paul urged his young understudy, Timothy, "Stir up the gift within you." We need to stir up our gifts and talents. Putting these talents or gifts together make us the one body the Church. By virtue of our baptism it is our obligation/duty as Catholics to use these talents and gifts

Maybe these qualities and traits are buried beneath depression and discouragement or negative voices of people telling you that you can't. But the good things of God are still there.

Getting the call to come forward to a higher place is a humbling and scary

experience. It means that someone has seen our gift, recognized it as coming from the Spirit and calling us up to a higher place to share it with all. It means someone has been watching us, seeing how the Spirit is working through us and calling us out of our humility to a place we may never have dreamt we would be.

For every one who exalts them self will be humbled, but the one who humbles themselves will be exalted.” We have so much talent in our parishes that we should have a choir singing at every Sunday Mass.

We have so many people with great speaking ability that belong to our parishes. They could be proclaiming the word through the weekly scripture readings, that we may never see the same person for months. We have so many people who are God fearing and show such a reverence for the Eucharist that we would never be scurrying around 5 minutes before Mass starts, looking for altar servers or Extra Ordinary ministers of the Eucharist.

Our school would be filled to capacity maybe even with a waiting list, we would have more Religious Education teachers, our youth group would be so large that the public schools would have to work around our activities instead of the other way around.

We could have so many people coming to worship with us, wondering what we got, and wanting to be a part of it, so that each week the ushers would have to find places for them sit, not just on Christmas and Easter. I could go on and on but I won’t.

The one thing we would never ever hear would be the phrases, “If only I had been asked, or no one ever asked me.”

This weekend I humbly say to you. “Come my friend, move up to a higher position.”

1(from Harold E. Kohn's *Thoughts Afield: Meditations Through the Seasons — Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter*, Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Mich.: 1957).