March 30th, 2020 (Tuesday)

**Humility as the Precondition to Being a Saint**

Have you ever heard of St. Francis of Paola? Not St. Francis of Assis, though St. Francis of Paola derived his name from St. Francis. I first heard of St. Francis of Paola last week when I was getting ready to write a reflection for today. Turns out that today is his memorial. So, who is St. Francis of Paola? I think looking at where he is from can shed a light on who he is.

St. Francis of Paola was born on March 27th, 1416 in Paola, Italy, and died on April 2 in the year 1507 on Good Friday. At a young age, he established a reputation for an austere life to holiness. At the age of 20, he began living a hermit’s life of solitude, penance, prayer, and fasting in a cave in Southern Italy. At that time, he was part of the Friars Minor, a Franciscan order. His simple life attracted many followers. His followers increased to the point that he established a new religious order. Wanting to keep the lifestyle of Francis, he named the new order Hermits of St. Francis of Assisi. Not only did Francis of Paola live a contemplative life, but he also did apostolic works due to the many gifts bestowed on him, such as healing and prophesy. He even had the gift of casting out demons. After the establishment of the order, he changed the name from minors to orders of minims, meaning least. Humility being the trademark of the brothers. [[1]](#footnote-1)

It is the last part that I want to focus on, humility. So many of us are familiar with the word humility that we probably never stop and ask ourselves, “What is humility?” Some of us might even think of Kendrick Lamar’s lyrics in the song HUMBLE, “Sit down, be humble” as if that settled any confusion as to what it means to be humble. But such a view is far from the truth. In fact, to be humble, contrary to modern opinion, is not weakness but the highest virtue one can aspire for. Why? Well, this has to do with becoming a saint, which is the goal of all Christians. You see, all the saints differ in the sins they have committed. But when it comes to their salvation, they all agree in one thing—humility. In heaven, they have passed the test of humility. humility is the hallmark of all saints. The best way of becoming humble is to have a proper understanding of the word humility.

Etymologically speaking, humility has its root in Latin *humus*, which literally means earth or “grounded to the earth.” To be a humble person is to be down to earth. Just think about it, don’t you say, or hear people say, “Oh, that person is down to earth.” Such an idiomatic expression contains a lot of truth when speaking about humility, because to be down to earth is in a way to be a humble person. In fact, Genesis reminds us of this fact by claiming that God created humanity from the earth (Genesis 2:7). At the same time, to know your roots, that is, a created being, is also to know the corollary, *you are not God*. Indeed, it is by claiming that we are not God that leads us to the awareness of our humanity which includes our brokenness, wounds, in short, our sins. The awareness and acknowledgment of our humanness is the first step to true humility.

This is what we see when we look at the life of St. Francis of Paola. He wanted to live a holy life by having humility being the guiding principle. He desired to stay true to the earth by calling himself the least (minim) of his brothers. Such humility can only come from the Grace of God. I would like to conclude with this story of Francis of Paola:

One day, a woman who was possessed by a demon was brought before Francis. Out of charity for the woman, Francis secluded himself the whole night. Intensely, he prayed and did penance for her. The following day, he went back to her. The lady was convulsing terribly. The demon spoke from her, “I am not afraid of any of you, but of Francis.” Do you think that maybe the demon saw something in him, like humility? It has been said that Satan lacks nothing but in one thing, humility.

As the Lenten season comes to a close, let us ask God for the Grace of being humble by staying true to our promises and ourselves. As we pray in the name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. St. Francis of Paola, pray for us! Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us! Amen.

1. If you want to learn more about his life, you can find it by clicking on this link. <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-francis-of-paola/> And of course, wiki is a great access as well too. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)