

Reality regularly forces the Faithful to come back down to earth. Humiliations are common enough in everyday life. These readings help the Faithful deal with such humiliations. Accepting humiliation is one way to bring the love of God to life.

Humiliation has a way of making one realize sinfulness. The Book of Wisdom is about how God loves sinners. Psalm 145 is an act of thanksgiving that God is forgiving. In 2 Thessalonians, the acerbic Paul encourages his friends to stay the course, despite whatever obstacles may come between what Paul did and did not teach. Because of the love of God, Paul is not here particularly concerned about sin. In the Gospel, Luke looks toward Jerusalem, with Jesus.¹ In other words, on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus is letting the Faithful know that he loves them despite their sinfulness and whatever humiliations they may suffer.

Wisdom 11:22—12:2

Verse 11:22, *the whole universe*, may also be translated *the whole world*,² meaning that God does love the world. Worldliness is something else. Verse 12:2, *you rebuke offenders little by little* is about the humiliations the Faithful suffer in the process of purifying their souls for their God.

Psalm 145: 1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13, 14 (cf. 1)

The Lectio uses Psalm 145 according to the following chart.

<u>Reading</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>verses</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
54C	414	8-9, 10-11, 13-14	(cf. 1) Easter 5
		Comments from May 9, 2004 are reincorporated here.	
100A	678	1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14	(cf. 1) Ordinary 14
		Comments from July 7, 2002 are reincorporated here.	
110B	730	10-11	(cf. 16) Ordinary 17
112A	741	8-9,	(cf. 16) Ordinary 18
		Comments from August 4, 2002 are reincorporated here.	
133A	840	2-3, 8-9,	(18a) Ordinary 25
		Comments from September 22, 2002 are reincorporated here.	
153C	938	1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13, 14	(cf. 1) Today

¹ Dennis Hamm, S.J., "What the Samaritan Leper Sees: The Narrative Christology of Luke 17:11-19", the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 56, No. 2 (April 1994) 275-276.

² Stanley B. Marrow, "Κοσμος in John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 64, No. 1 (January 2002) 93.

In verse 14, the Nova Vulgata translates *bowed down* with *depressos*, the root word for the English *depressed*,³ often a result of humiliation.

The antiphon, “I will praise your name forever, my king and my God” is about loving without worrying about any humiliation or suffering involved. Appropriately, Pastoral Care of the Sick, Part II: Pastoral Care of the Dying, Chapter Eight: Rites for Exceptional Circumstances, Continuous Rite of Penance, Anointing, and Viaticum, Responsorial Psalms E, uses Psalm 145.⁴

One more point completes these observations. Psalm 145 is an alphabetical acrostic, i.e. developed verse by verse according to the Hebrew alphabet. Acrostic psalms, therefore, favor the rational over the emotional,⁵ which is the human way to cope with suffering. Like the yet-to-be-written hymn says, “Hallelujah, anyway!”

2 Thessalonians 1:11—22

In verse 11, Saint Paul prays *that our God may make you worthy of his calling*. Such is the everlasting prayer of the Faithful, especially of those suffering humiliation. Paul assumes God will do just that.

John 3:16

This is the verse often displayed by fans on television at sporting events. *God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life*. The love of God for the Faithful engenders legitimate self-esteem.

Luke 19:1-10

Verse 1, *and intended to pass through the town* is only implied in the original Greek and subsequent Vulgate.

³ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate © Dictionary: eleventh Edition (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2003) 310.

⁴ International Commission on English in the Liturgy: A Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences, The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum: Approved for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1983) 328.

⁵ Hanan Eshel and John Strugnell, “Alphabetical Acrostics in Pre-Tannaitic Hebrew,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000) 444.

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Verse 2, the Greek for *now* makes more sense as an Aramaic transliteration than as good grammatical Greek. One of the original Greek manuscripts changes the Aramaic-Greek into Greek-Greek.⁶ The point is that this section of Luke points strongly to the everyday language used by Jesus.

Verse 3, *chief tax collector* in the Greek, is a compound word drawing from the *tax collector* of Luke 18:10, seen last Sunday. I wonder whether *chief toll collector* would also work. The work itself must have been humiliating. In this case the chief tax collector, worker, accepted his humiliation to turn to and accept God as his personal savior.

Verse 5, ... "*Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.*" suits the Faithful coming down, through humiliation, from excessive self-esteem, for God wants to dwell in the depth of their soul. Humiliation tends to purge the Faithful from attachment to worldly things; something Zacchaeus experienced. According to one legend, Zacchaeus later became the first bishop of Caesarea, where the Gospel of Matthew was written for Christian Jews as they turned toward the Gentiles.⁷

Note that in this instance, Jesus invites himself into the house of Zacchaeus. That is the way he always enters the heart. Responding with joy is the ever-eternal proper response. Grumbling about association with sinners is never appropriate.

The term *house* means *household*. *Household* would mean not only immediate family, but also social circumstances. Mark 10:29 is about leaving one's house and family for Jesus.⁸ Luke 19:5 seems headed in the same direction as Mark for the Faithful.

Using material possessions as an aspect of discipleship is a Lukan theme. Zacchaeus illustrates use without dispossession. How to relate to the affluent is an aspect of preference-for-the-poor theology not addressed in the Diocese of Richmond strategic plan.⁹ Jesus also associated with the affluent, some of whom

⁶ Maximilian Zerwick, S.J., English Edition adapted from the Fourth Latin Edition by Joseph Smith, S.J., Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblico—114—Biblical Greek (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994) 63-64

⁷ B. T. Viviano, O.P., "*Where Was the Gospel According to St. Matthew Written?*" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 41, No. 4 (October 1979), page 546.

⁸ Robert H. Gundry, "Mark 10:29: Order in the List," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 3 (July 1997) 465-468.

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may have been the women who provided for his material needs. Richard Bauckham observes that in Sacred Scripture male disciples generally did not contribute to the financial needs of Jesus and his disciples, whereas female disciples did.¹⁰

Humiliation forces the Faithful to accept limitations. Accepting the humiliation of leaving family and all other worldly possessions can be a way that leads to God. Making any commitment forces one to leave things. Detachment applies not only to vowed religious, but also to all the Faithful, whether vowed or not. Humiliation can bring about such detachment.

Realizing that God loves everything he makes is Wisdom of the highest order. Thanking God for such love is an appropriate response. Realizing that God makes the Faithful holy is a movement of grace. Living with a sinner, as Jesus did with Zacchaeus, is an act of humility capable of bringing God's love to life.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

⁹ The Catholic Diocese of Richmond, November 2002, "We've Come this Far by Faith: A statement compiled by the Process Task Force from responses presented by the Diocesan Pastoral and Priest Councils, the Chancery staff and Diocesan parishes, schools, campus ministries, retreat centers and commissions" 3/9 at <http://www.richmonddiocese.org/docs/WeveComeThisFar.pdf>. October 17, 2004.

¹⁰ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002)113, 116.