



**Contributed by Father Paul Voisin, C.R.**

Father Paul Voisin was ordained in 1977. Father Paul has served the community as a missionary, in parish churches, and as Provincial Superior. He served as Pastor of several parishes in Bermuda from 2008 - 2017. Fr. Paul is presently serving as the Superior General for the Congregation of the Resurrection in Rome for the next 2 years.

**TWENTY NINTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME**  
**October 17, 2021**

**GATHERING TIME**  
*(10-15 Minutes)*

**Introduction to the Word:**

My father often had a wisdom that I remember fondly. I remember on one occasion he told me: "Make sure to pay attention to the people you see on the way 'up', because you will see them on the way 'down'". I don't believe that I have ever been an overly ambitious person, or someone who sought the limelight or authority. Yet, in time, I found myself serving the Congregation of the Resurrection, first as Provincial Superior of the Ontario-Kentucky Province (2005 to 2008), and now as Superior General (2017 to 2023). I have often thought of the words of my father in my role of leadership among my brothers in Community.

Recently I prepared my "Message" to share with each House of the Congregation for the second round of Canonical Visitations. With all the reading that I had done during the pandemic, four of the books spoke to me about leadership, and so I prepared a text (with questions) for reflection and sharing, individually and as a House. The three points I brought to their attention were: recognition of our own gifts and talents, but also awareness of our weaknesses (to work on them); our ability to help others to recognize, accept and use their gifts and talents; and to have a vision and purpose. In that first step, I did write about the virtue of humility, modeling our leadership on the humility of Jesus.

**Warm-up Activity** *(about 8-10 minutes):*

1. What are the impressions or images that come to mind when you hear the word "humble"?
2. What are some positive, and negative, impressions and images that the term "humility" can produce?
3. How have I learned humility?

## The Table of the Word

I share with you, some of the text of my “Message”, which speaks to the theme of this week: “Brené Brown, in her book *Dare to Lead*, makes an important distinction between *‘being a knower and being right ... and ... being a learner and getting it right’*. Sometimes, in our human condition, we can misuse the leadership with which we have been entrusted. I am talking about the leadership that is ours as children of God, followers of Jesus, people led by the Holy Spirit. Once again, we are all called to be leaders. I have discovered, in Community leadership, the importance of being a *‘learner’* in this role. I believe it will continue until the day I leave the office of Superior General (and then I will continue to *‘learn’* in my next assignment). Psychologist Harriet Lerner challenges leaders *‘to listen with the same passion with which they want to be heard’*. Unfortunately, perhaps, some of us have experienced a leader, or leaders, who were more *‘knowers’* than *‘learners,’* and as a result, we did not feel listened to, understood, valued and cared about, and properly responded to. It is a great responsibility to lead, and not to be misused by *‘lording it over’* others. Leadership can, and should, change us. Unfortunately, in our human condition, it may not always be for the better. Power can corrupt and change people and bring them to misuse their role. Like Machiavelli, leaders can be intent upon gaining, holding, and using power. This is not the kind of leader that we are called to be. Nor are we called to be *‘bosses,’* which can imply someone who governs from above and out of reach, who *‘lords it over us’*. Rather, we are called to be *‘leaders’* who lead by accompanying and inspiring a shared vision.

I think of the leadership of Jesus with his disciples, how He challenged the status quo, and inspired a shared vision – the vision of His Father’s kingdom. I think of the humble and often doubt-ridden leadership of Bogdan Jánski, the Founder of the Congregation of the Resurrection, who shared his vision with Peter Semenenko and Jerome Kajsiwicz (co-Founders), and with so many other young Polish emigrés in Paris. This style of leadership was passed on by Peter and Jerome to subsequent generations of Resurrectionists, whom we see throughout our history leading in a spirit of fraternity and of careful listening to God and to one another in Community. This shared vision encourages others to listen and know, to act, and to lead.”

### **Penitential Rite:**

In our human condition we turn to Almighty God in our need, asking for forgiveness and healing, insight and understanding. so that we might be His instruments in our families, at our work and school, among our friends, and in our faith community:

**Lord Jesus,** give us humble hearts to know, love and serve you.

**Lord, have mercy.**

**Christ Jesus,** renew us in your love and cleanse us of all hurtful pride.

**Christ, have mercy.**

**Lord Jesus,** help us to follow you faithfully, to lead others as you did.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Let us pray, in the words of St. Thérèse of Lisieux:

“O Jesus!

When You were a Pilgrim on earth, You said:

“Learn of Me for I am gentle and humble of heart  
and you will find rest for your souls.”

O Mighty Monarch of Heaven, yes, my souls finds rest in seeing You,  
clothed in the form and nature of a slave,  
humbling Yourself to wash the feet of Your apostles.

I recall Your words that teach me how to practice humility:

“I have given you an example so that you may do what I have done.

The disciple is not greater than the Master ...

If you understand this, happy are you if you put them into practice.”

Lord,

I do understand these words that came from Your gentle and humble heart  
and I want to practice them with the help of Your grace.

I beg You, my Divine Jesus, to send me a humiliation  
whenever I try to set myself above others.

I know, O my God, that You humble the proud soul but to the one who humbles one’s self  
You give an eternity of glory.

So, I want to put myself in the last rank and to share Your humiliations  
so as “to have a share with You” in the kingdom of Heaven.”

But, You know my weakness, Lord. Every morning I make a resolution to practice humility and  
in the evening I recognize that I have committed again many faults of pride. At this I am tempted  
to become discouraged but I know that discouragement is also pride. Therefore, O my God, I  
want to base my hope in You alone. Since You can do everything, deign to bring to birth in my  
soul the virtue I desire. To obtain this grace of Your infinite mercy I will very often repeat:

“O Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, make my heart like Yours!”

### **SCRIPTURE REFLECTION TIME** (45 minutes)

*(As Christians we believe that the **WORD** of God we hear proclaimed each Sunday is an empowering word, and that God is present in the word proclaimed. This is the word that God wants us to hear today. The dynamic of the small Christian community, namely, reflecting on our life story within the context of this word, and sharing the insights of these reflections, is such that God’s Spirit becomes present, and the gifts of the Spirit are experienced as empowering and life giving.)*

### **FIRST READING** *Isaiah 53:10-11*

Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **SECOND READING** *Hebrews 4:14-16*

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The Word of the Lord **Thanks be to God**

## **GOSPEL** *Mark 10:35-45*

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## **COMMENTARY:**

Our First Reading speaks of how the Messiah would serve the people of God. He would suffer, as "*an offering for sin*", bearing the sins of the people. This would be the will of the Father. How perfectly this prophecy leads us to recognize Jesus as this "suffering servant"! This would be a sign of the humility of spirit of this messenger of God, who would "make the will of the Lord prosper". This messenger is Jesus Christ!

Our Second Reading speaks of Jesus as the "*great high priest*". A priest, in the Jewish tradition, was the one who offered sacrifice to God, and in this case, Jesus offered Himself as the priest and the sacrifice. How beautifully we are reminded that Jesus, as the "suffering servant" of God, knows and understands us, having shared our human nature. He can empathize with our weaknesses, and reaches out to us with His saving grace as we follow His example and serve others as selflessly as He did.

In the gospel, we see that the disciples "still don't get it" ... they don't understand Jesus. This happens frequently, and I am surprised that He does not lose patience with them. James and John wanted to share in the glory of God, and they wanted it now. At this point in His life and ministry, that glory had not yet been revealed. But, the two brothers were betting that, when it happened, they would be among the first there with Him. They were looking for power over others, even in the political realm. I can imagine that some of the other disciples were not only surprised at the request of James and John, but perhaps were even thinking the same thing, and sorry that they hadn't spoken first. The words of Jesus are a lesson for all of them, and for us today. He

tells them that if they want to be *first*, they must be *servant* of all. That was not what they had in mind! They did see, as Jesus said, that they were interested in “*lording it over*” others. That was why they found the washing of the feet a mystery, as it was the role of the lowest servant in the household, and why they saw Jesus’ crucifixion and death as a defeat and failure. Only after the resurrection, when they had all the “pieces of the puzzle,” did they recognize and understand that Jesus “*did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many*”. With the coming of the Holy Spirit, they were filled with zeal and courage to do that as well.

Allow 5 – 10 minutes for the participants to react to the **commentary** to identify a newly discovered insight.

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:**

1. “*He has put him to grief*” **Isaiah 53:10-11**

Jesus suffered. He suffered for our sake, our salvation. God the Father, out of love for us, gave His Son to the world, so that we might discover how to live, and how to die (and how to rise).

- a) What was the effect of Jesus’ experience of “grief”?
- b) How has suffering “formed,” “reformed,” or “transformed” me?
- c) How have I experienced Christ accompanying me in my “grief”?

2. “*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace*” **Hebrews 4:14-16**

Not everyone’s relationship with God is based on trust and love. Sadly, due to circumstances of life, some people are fearful to “*draw near to the throne of grace*”.

- a) How have I grown in trust and confidence in God?
- b) How have I experienced God “sympathizing with my weaknesses”?
- c) How can I give others confidence to “*draw near to the throne of grace*”?

3. “*Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory*” **Mark 10:35-45**

Perhaps sometimes we have had the experience that we “just didn’t get it” when someone was trying to explain something. Such was the case with the sons of Zebedee. Despite the preaching of Jesus, and His miraculous works, they still did not understand fully the humility with which He served. They were thinking, as the world thinks, that “success” would mean power, wealth, and prestige. Washing feet and dying on a cross were not signs of “success” for them, or the world.

- a) Can I relate to James and John, not “getting it”?
- b) How have I learned humility?
- c) How do I feel about being “*servant*” or “*slave*”?

### **CARING-PRAYING TIME:** (15-20 minutes)

1. **Word of the Week:** “*servant*”

2. **Suggestions for the Week:**

This week, with the help of God’s grace, confirm that you “got it”; that you understand where you stand before God and before others. We all need a healthy pride in ourselves, without losing our dependence on, or gratitude to, God. But we also need humility, recognizing the grace of God

at work in us, His call to serve Him and others, and the importance of our example to others who may be only looking for “success” as the world sees it.

Be more aware this week of how your humble service of others is leading them to “*the throne of grace*,” that there is more to strive for in life than power, wealth and prestige, but rather the values and virtues of the kingdom of God. There is no need to humiliate oneself, but there is a need to recognize that who we are and what we have comes from God, and that we are to be faithful disciples and stewards.

### 3. **Intercessions:**

Let us turn to God, the source of all grace, with our prayers of petition:

For our Holy Father, and all the leaders of our Church, that they will witness to humility for all the Church and world to see, we pray ... **Lord, hear us**

For the leaders of nations, that they may “get it” in their leadership of the people entrusted to them, and encourage work towards the common good, we pray ... **Lord, hear us**

For those who are fearful of “*the throne of grace*”, that they may recognize the love and mercy of God, and approach with confidence, to receive further graces and blessings, we pray ... **Lord, hear us**

For the proud and haughty, that they will come to realize that their power, wealth and prestige should be used to serve, not to “*lord it over*,” we pray ... **Lord, hear us**

For those who see humility as a weakness, something to hide, that their shining example, modelled on Jesus, will lead others to embrace a closer walk with Jesus, we pray ... **Lord, hear us**

For those who serve us in any capacity, at work or at school, in our home, in the grocery stores and restaurants, in hospitals and churches, that we may recognize their dignity and never abuse of their generosity and dedication, we pray ... **Lord, hear us**

Let us pray, completing the prayer of St. Therese of Lisieux:

“You know my weakness, Lord.

Every morning I make a resolution to practice humility

and in the evening, I recognize that I have committed again many faults of pride.

At this I am tempted to become discouraged but I know that discouragement is also pride.

Therefore, O my God, I want to base my hope in You alone.

Since You can do everything, deign to bring to birth in my soul the virtue I desire.

To obtain this grace of Your infinite mercy I will very often repeat:

“O Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, make my heart like Yours!” Amen

**With hands and hearts united in gratitude for God’s favours today, we pray that all those in our influence be moved to be open to your Word and your Spirit, while we pray as one, **OUR FATHER...****

**Celebrating the Word.** Resurrection Ministries of the Congregation of the Resurrection Ontario-Kentucky Province (including the former Resurrection Centre), 265 Westmount Road North, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G7. (*Celebrating the Word* was founded by Father Frank Ruetz, C.R. deceased 2012). For information: **website:** [www.resurrectionists.ca](http://www.resurrectionists.ca). **Email:** [provincialoffice@resurrectioncollege.ca](mailto:provincialoffice@resurrectioncollege.ca) The Scripture version used in this commentary is the New Revised Standard Version (copyrighted by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA).