

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Just a reminder that Sunday, November 5 (today) is the beginning of the 33-day preparation for our consecration to Jesus through Mary. I hope you join with me in giving ourselves over more fully into her beautiful and maternal hands.

Today's Gospel speaks to us beautifully of the call to humility and service. Jesus ends this portion of the Gospel saying, "**Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted**" (Matthew 23:12). This is a great reminder about the goal of our lives. We are not to seek power, money and pleasure as the goals of our lives; we are, rather, to seek God and His Kingdom. It is not authority but love which ultimately matters. How do I love? How do you love? Do we do it as selflessly as we can? How does our love take shape in service to others?

St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta knew this deeply. She made sure that she did the most menial tasks among her sisters. She very often was the one to clean the toilets. There's a story about her that as she was on the plane going to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, she disappeared into one of the restrooms for a while. She then went into another one. When asked what she was doing, she commented that she was doing exorcisms. What did she mean? She knew the temptation to vanity and pride was strong, especially given that we was going to receive this very prestigious award, so she turned her eyes away from herself to do the most menial task – cleaning toilets – so that she could "scrub away" any pride or vanity that was there.

We were made for love. This is the very purpose of our lives. Everything we do is in some way connected to this need to love and be loved. When this desire is twisted up, it can lead to much selfishness and taking, instead of selfless giving. When the heart has been wounded by false love, it can become cold and distant so as to protect the heart from the pain of not being loved. Everything is somehow related to our need to love and be loved.

Humility is a key virtue in loving. Humility is NOT that I become a doormat. Humility is *truth*: I see who I am in light of God. This means recognizing my brokenness, weakness, failures – that I am not God, and that 200 years ago I did not exist and in 200 years I will not be on this earth. But it also means recognizing that I am a child of God, that I am beloved, and that I am not the sum of my failures but of God's love for me. Without this truth of humility we cannot really love others. Love is never about "What will you do for me?" but about "How can I help you become the best person you can be, finding true and lasting happiness?" As long as I am exalting myself, I will never be able to see *you* as you are – a unique, unrepeatable child of God, with a sacred dignity that can never be removed – rather, I will see you as someone I can use for some reason, or someone who is in the way of my goals. Humility helps me to see that, well, it's not really all about me anyway, and so I need to reach out beyond myself.

We look to Mary in our endeavor for love. Mary truly was humble. I'm sure she had her own plans for her life, yet when the Archangel Gabriel appeared, she submitted to God's plan, "**Let it be done unto me according to your word**" (Luke 1:38). She who became the Mother of God did not hesitate to take a dangerous journey to care for her elderly (and now pregnant) relative, Elizabeth. In so many ways, Mary showed humble love. She can teach us today how to receive God's love, recognizing the gift God has made us (Mary's *Magnificat* recognized this truth: "**From this day all generations will call me blessed, the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his name**" Luke 1:48-49), and how we were made, not for grasping power, but in selfless loving service to God and neighbor.