

A young man was at a dinner party with his friends when a guest he wasn't expecting showed up. As the evening went on and as the group of teens and young adults at this casual dinner finished their meals, one-by-one they moved into the living room to continue their conversation, and the young man found himself alone at the dinner table with this guest that he had not been expecting. So the young man said to the guest, "so I guess you're supposed to convince me about the Catholic Church?" You see, the friends of the young man who had invited him as well as the other guest, knew that this young man was struggling with questions about God; and the other guest, whom the young man was not expecting, was an old, Catholic priest.

We'll shift gears for a moment and we'll get back to that story later. I want to read a passage from a little known but excellent book. It was written by a Carthusian monk, St Denis the Carthusian: it is called *Virtues and Vices*. Quoting St Augustine, St Denis says that pride is a perverse love of loftiness; an inordinate passion to obtain positions of power or authority, to rejoice in getting to the top, to be above all others." This is pride of will, and St Denis says that this pride of will is *exactly* as it was in case of the first evil and apostate angel.

Putting it another way, St Albert (*De IV Coaequaevis*) says that pride can be taken in three senses. *First*, it is an appetite for being on top in any matter. St Gregory calls this a swelling of the mind, which is an obstacle to truth – incidentally, this is why pride is blinding (just think of the Pharisee in today's Gospel: he thought of himself as above other men, and was blind to the fact that he was not justified while the publican was). *Secondly*, pride can be thought of as love of one's own good caused by distancing oneself from God. *Thirdly*, pride can be taken as a yearning for one's own prominence in power, a craving to heap up for oneself honors. St Denis calls this the devil's special sin.

The sin of pride has three forms: *First*, it can take the form where the prideful person is inordinately pleased with oneself – he thinks himself greater than he actually is. *Second*, pride can take the form of seeking to win the favor of others, and wishing to be held by them in high esteem. This prideful person considers only his own honor, reputation and his appearance in the eyes of others, even when he does self-effacing things to show himself to be "humble". St Denis calls this form of pride, "an enormity... a very wicked sin." *Third*, pride can take the form of jockeying for position and wishing to preside over others and make them subject to you, to your decisions.

Those who go down this road of pride follow their father, who is the devil. The devil is the father of pride. The sin of the fallen angels, the devils, was pride: when they were created, they saw their beauty and they turned their thoughts inward instead of giving glory to God who created them.

And this is exactly what the Pharisee in today's Gospel does! Notice how it says he "prayed *within himself*". In pride, he turned within. He had a perverse love of loftiness... he rejoiced in being above all others, as he thought he was. But the Pharisee left having asked nothing of God, whereas the humble publican asked God for mercy and this man left justified... forgiven. God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble – James 4:6.

What about us? Do *we* have this perverse love of loftiness? Do *we* want to be esteemed by others? Do we want others to notice us doing our devotions in church? Do we have an inordinate passion to have some kind of power over someone else; something to hold over a brother, a sister, a

mother, a father, a husband, a wife? “Why should I let my neighbor borrow *my* things? I’ll obey... but not right away! I’ll do my chores... but I want the *power* of complaining first.”

Or do we have another type of pride? Do we pride ourselves in thinking ourselves *above* others? This is the sin of traditional Catholics. We might see the errors in the world, in the Church and in the hierarchy of the Church. But as St Denis puts it, do we *rejoice* in seeing ourselves as *above* these errors? A bishop does something wrong – and is our reaction “Wow; I can’t wait to read how this traditional blog is going to chew him out for that!” Or; a person new to the Traditional Latin Mass comes into the church. Perhaps there are traditional Catholic customs of behavior or dress that they haven’t yet learned. How do we treat this visitor? Do we look with visible disdain at them, not recalling that there was a time when *we* had to be taught? Or are we disgusted that a person is not externally perfect in our presence? Do we act as though we were saying, “O God, I give Thee thanks that I’m not as the rest of Catholics, irreverent... loose morals, as also is this Novus Ordo Catholic. I fast from midnight: I tithe 10 percent.”

Or instead, do we make it a point to **warmly, kindly and cheerfully** welcome *each and every* new face we see at Mass? Or like the fallen angels and the Pharisee in the Gospel, are we so turned in on ourselves that we don’t see the suffering publican – the newcomer to our parish; suffering because he just wants to see a friendly face welcoming him to this parish as to his own home?

St Thomas Aquinas says that Charity is Friendship. Citing Aristotle (Ethic. viii, 2,3), St Thomas says that not every love has the character of friendship, but when we love someone so as to will what is good for him, friendship is implied. If, however, we do not wish to *do* good for the thing we love, but rather **we** want something good for *ourselves*, it is *not* the love of friendship, but of a kind of concupiscence. Since friendship is between friend and friend, it needs a certain *mutual* love; so there must be some kind of communication, and therefore simply well-wishing is not sufficient. In charity, God *communicates* His happiness to *us*, and when we love our *neighbor* in charity, we communicate the happiness of God to *him*, for the sake of God. So can we see how simply wishing a newcomer well in our mind is not enough for charity? For in simply *wishing* a person well there is no *communication* – when someone is present, we have to communicate that charity.

On Saturday Pope Francis said in his sermon: “We cannot keep ourselves shut up in parishes, in our communities when so many people are waiting for the Gospel! It’s not enough simply to open the door in welcome, but we must go out through that door to seek and meet the people.” <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/07/28/pope-francis-draws-3m-to-rio-vigil/#ixzz2aJY8SosP>

“Are we still a Church capable of warming hearts? A Church capable of leading people back to Jerusalem? Of bringing them home? Jerusalem is where our roots are: Scripture, catechesis, sacraments, community, friendship with the Lord, Mary and the apostles... Are we still able to speak of these roots in a way that will revive a sense of wonder at their beauty?”

Speaking of those that have left the Catholic Church in South America, he said, “Many people have left because they were promised something more *lofty*, more *powerful*... But what is *more lofty* than the love revealed in Jerusalem? Nothing is more lofty than the abasement of the Cross, since there we truly approach the height of love! Are we still capable of demonstrating this truth to

those who think that the apex of life is to be found elsewhere? Do we know anything *more powerful* than the strength hidden within the ‘weakness’ of love, goodness, truth and beauty?”

In a Tweet on Jul 28, 2013, he said, “We cannot keep ourselves shut up in parishes, in our communities, when so many people are waiting for the Gospel!” “I would like those inside the Dioceses to go out into the open; I want the Church to be in the streets; I want us to defend ourselves *against* all that is worldliness, comfort, **being closed and turned within**”. Remember the sin of pride of the fallen angels – instead of serving God they **turned within**.

Let’s get back to the young man at the dinner party speaking with the old priest. The priest asked him what about the Catholic faith he did not believe: they went down the line listing the doctrines. The young man said that he agreed with them all. Then why, asked the priest, did not want to be Catholic? The young man said, “I never felt loved in a Catholic Church.” Don’t underestimate the power of love. Don’t underestimate the vacuum formed in a soul when one doesn’t experience that love, even though he is exposed to the truth. Let it never be said that anyone ‘never felt loved’ in this Catholic Church.

I want to propose something to each of us – a request and a challenge. After each Sunday Mass you attend, make it a point seek out and find the newcomer, the one that looks lonely, and make sure to warmly, kindly and cheerfully welcome that person. And now the challenge. Christians that belong to other groups walk this neighbor as I’m sure they do yours looking for converts. The challenge for each of us is this: I would like each one of us here at least once a month to invite one person to either come to the faith or to come back to the faith. In time we are going to do this in a more organized fashion in the parish, but for now invite someone to come to the faith, to the Church at least once a month. It can be a neighbor, a friend, a checkout clerk. Give them an apologetics handout – we have them at the entrances to the church, but most importantly give them **charity**. We have Apologetics classes online, if you need some Biblical pointers on the truth of the faith, but most importantly show them **charity**.

We cannot keep ourselves shut up in our communities, when so many are waiting for the Gospel! And let it never be said that anyone never felt loved in this church.