

Pride and Humility (Ezekiel 28:1-10)

Our first reading from the prophet Ezekiel is a great reminder of the famous phrase that pride comes before the fall. Ezekiel delivers a divine judgment against a human ruler (a "prince") of the wealthy ancient city of Tyre. The prince of Tyre credits his own genius and business skills for his wealth. He has let his success turn into blasphemous pride.

The prince has been clever in his trade and wealth accumulation. He claims to sit in the seat of gods. He says, "*I occupy a godly throne in the heart of the sea!*" The prince's riches have corrupted his heart as he feels invincible and acts like he is a god.

In response, God promises to strip away the prince's splendor, revealing that the prince is a mortal man. The prince will have an unhappy ending with a violent death as foreign invaders will cut him down.

While a tough message for Ezekiel to deliver, it is critically important for every generation. In our Catholic tradition, the vice of pride is a *nasty* virus. Pride is the excessive love of one's own excellence. It could also be defined as disordered self-love. A prideful person has an exaggerated view of his or her own talents, merits, and importance. Pride is the "queen of all vices."

Just as there are symptoms when we have a virus, so there are symptoms when pride has infected our spiritual life. For example, the prideful typically have a contempt for others. They treat their neighbors as inferior and dismiss constructive criticism with anger.

The prideful also obsess over being viewed as greater than their peers. They must constantly "feed" their pride by touting their accomplishments. Additionally, the prideful tend to be self-reliant. They believe that their success rests on their own doing and express little or no gratitude to God or others. St. Thomas Aquinas says that pride breeds other vices such as anger, envy, and greed.

Naturally, the antibody to the virus of pride is humility. Humility restrains pride. The Catholic Catechism says that humility is the foundation of prayer because approaching God requires us to approach the truth that we are "beggars" before God (CCC 2559). Some signs of humility are a willingness to acknowledge our sins, giving others credit wherever it is due, and recognizing that we cannot do anything without God.

The humble person surrenders to God's will instead of seeking worldly power or prestige. Furthermore, the humble person recognizes the good in others. It is a good practice to ask for humility in your prayer regularly. The Litany of humility is certainly a great way to grow in this critically important virtue.

~St. Thérèse, pray for us!