



JUNE 2017: HUMILITY AND DISCERNMENT
CHN Series: Aid to Prayer and Reflection

Sister Carol , CHN





I have always liked the reading from Micah when he wanted to know how he could thank the Lord for all the Lord had done for him: was it to offer burnt offerings, thousands of rams, rivers of oil or a first born?

Micah 6:8 by Christ Community Chapel on Vimeo

None of these things but instead the reply came,

‘What does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?’ (Micah 6:6-8)

Many people think that being humble means being weak and passive. But that is not God’s message to us. We are not meant to put ourselves down although many of us were taught when we were younger that it was right to revere those people in authority – doctor, policeman, the vicar.

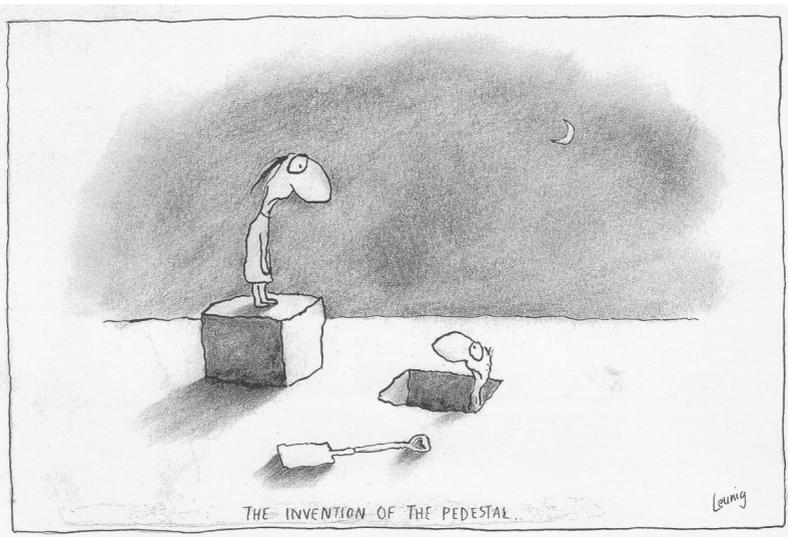


Image courtesy of Michael Leunig

When I first began teaching, I remember standing up whenever the Headmaster walked into the staffroom. In the Community, it was the custom for sisters to curtsy every time they passed the Mother Superior. I assure you they don't do that now. It was a sign of respect but I think it went a bit too far.

If we grew up with a sense that we were not important, it may have influenced our faith; making us feel that we were not worthy of God's love. But praise God, we now know we are all important and loved by God.

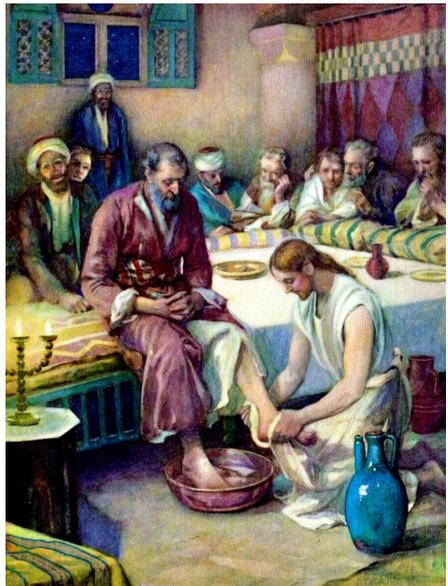
What then does it mean to walk humbly, to be a humble person? It certainly doesn't mean that when you are humble you are a wimp.

There is both true humility and false humility. True humility is distinctly different from false humility which consists of belittling one's own sanctity, gift, talents and accomplishments for the sake of receiving praise or adulation from others.

Bible based humility is different to worldly humility and it does not mean we have to grovel. When I humble myself I feel strong in the Lord. I don't need to be defensive. It does not mean being unaware of your gifts or calling. Our gifts are from God and should be used to his glory.

A great example of humility in Scripture is that of Mary of Bethany who washed Jesus feet.

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him.



*Jesus washes the feet of his disciples
by Waiting for the Word on Flickr*



*'The Anointing at Bethany' Used with the kind permission of the artist.
Copyright Daniel F. Gerhartz
www.danielgerhartz.com*

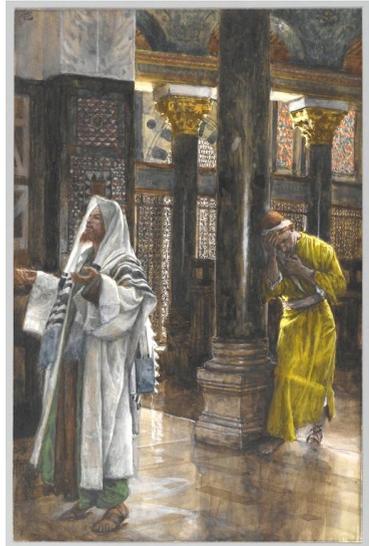
Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." (John 12:1-8)

Mary freely gave her all, not worrying what others thought of her. Clothing herself in humility, she poured a very costly perfume on Jesus and Jesus recognised the sacrifice Mary had made. Was there discernment in what Mary did or was she impulsive? Something to ponder on.

As we evaluate our lives, what can we offer one another? A heart that looks out for the interest of others, one that is not self-seeking or proud, a heart that serves and loves unconditionally, and a heart that cultivates humility.

We need to cultivate humility for it does not come naturally. Our ego always demands attention. The opposite of humility is pride and a good example of that in scripture is found in Luke 18:9-14 where we read about the Pharisee and the tax collector.

How does humility fit with discernment? Firstly, what is discernment? Discernment is a gift from God, which is given not only for ourselves, but is to be shared. It is a process in our own life and a realising of how the decisions we make affect the lives of others.



The Pharisee and the publican by James Tissot in Brooklyn Museum



We are told that the result of a right discernment will be known by its fruits and that the fruit that it bears will be fruit that will last. That fruit may be that we have found peace or new life, and that would certainly affect other people around us.

Some discernment cannot be done quickly. It may take many weeks or months or even years and requires a humble heart, much prayer and listening to God.

As we focus on our inner life and grow in awareness of the inner movements we learn to notice the shift in movements. We discover that some movements lead us to feel life and inner freedom if we follow them, but some movements to a sense of no life. This is a sign we are beginning to



Two paths by Javier Kohen

discern.

We all have to discern situations in our lives, not only once, but several times. Some more important than others; it is choosing the right path, the path that will give us life.

The attempt to 'do' discernment in a vacuum by simply following a set of instructions, without a relationship with God, is a misunderstanding of what discernment is and it becomes an impossible task. We do not learn discernment as though it was a recipe, rather we become discerning through the gift of God's grace and the grace of inner freedom.

You may like to reflect on some of the decisions you have made in your life and how they came about. Were they promptings from God? I am not meaning the many decisions we make daily but those in our lives when the decision affected our whole life style and perhaps how it affected others in our life. It is often said that discernment is primarily about relationship, not decision-making.



Child at Prayer by Eastman Johnson, c. 1873

It is only often in hindsight we see the movement of God in our lives.

‘Scriptural discernment is based not on interpretive knowledge but it is based on humility, faith, openness to God, thirst for truth, desire for wisdom and similar spiritual qualities. This kind of assurance carries with it a kind of self correction—the same humility that is required to receive it makes you open to correction. Without humility, you can easily move into self-delusion, wishful thinking, stubbornness, arrogance and so on.’ *(Attributed to Brian McLaren)*

PRAYER FOR DISCERNMENT

Lord I know that You love me
and that You have great plans for me.
But sometimes I am overwhelmed
by the thought of my future.
Show me how to walk forward
one day at a time.
As I explore the various options
which lie before me,
help me to listen openly to others,
and to pay attention to what is in the depth
of my own heart.
In this way,
may I hear Your call to a way of life
which will allow me to love as only I can,
and allow me to serve others
with the special gifts You have given me.
Amen.

The content of this booklet is from Sister Carol, CHN, based on her work for the Prayer Day of June 2017.

It is part of a series of 'Aids to Prayer and Reflection' which have been developed from our monthly Prayer Days, for your personal use. You may pick up other Aids from Community House or simply download copies from our website. We hope our readers find them helpful in their prayer lives.



1. A sense
A time of
and providence
in the "50
thout



One of the necessities of life is WATER. We probably take it for granted unless there are severe drought conditions. It is so basic—for quenching our thirst, for cooking, for growing the very food we eat and for cleansing and healing, in the society and age in which we live, water is readily available by turning on a tap. However, it was not always so!

Water can also be destructive and terrifying, e.g. torrential rain, floods, storms at sea, tsunamis, etc.

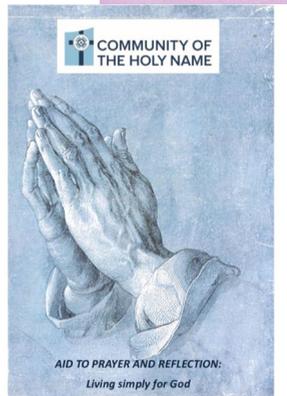


It is little wonder that springs and wells have been an important part of life from the earliest known times. We can read of the veneration of water by pagans and the value it held for the ancient Greeks and Romans, in the City of Bath, the springs were venerated long before the Romans went to Britain. By medieval times, wells in many parts of the country began to be regarded as holy places.

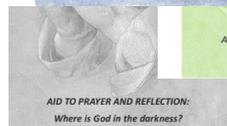
The word "well" comes from the Anglo-Saxon "wella", meaning a spring bubbling up from the ground, not a well as we think of it today as a shaft dug to reach underground water. The majority of wells in the UK were dedicated towards the end of the Middle Ages and some were Christianized from pagan worship, but not all. One of their original purposes may have been for baptisms. The blessing of water used in baptisms goes back to early Christian practice, as writings from the early Christian Fathers record. So, through every century, water has been revered with importance, expressed in a variety of ways.



CHN SERIES: AID TO PRAYER AND REFLECTION
March 2017: Lenten fasting and praying



Associate, CHN



AID TO PRAYER AND REFLECTION:
Renewing our spirits

AID TO PRAYER AND REFLECTION:
Where is God in the darkness?

AID TO PRAYER AND REFLECTION:
Sacred space and breath prayer

You are welcome to join us for Days of Prayer and Reflection, which are held at the Community House, on the first Thursday of the month, from March till November, 10am until 3pm.

The Eucharist is celebrated at midday and there are opportunities to sit quietly, use our library and wander in the gardens. BYO lunch; tea and coffee are provided.

There is no charge but a donation is appreciated.

Community of the Holy Name, 40 Cavanagh Street, Cheltenham, Victoria 3192
Phone 03 9583 2087 Email chnmelb@bigpond.com www.chnmelb.org