Reflection for 28th August – Humility

Of all the quotes and insights on humility my favourite is from C.S. Lewis; ‘humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less’. It is worth our time taking this on board and reflecting upon it.

Humility is not thinking less of yourself; knowing what we know, we know the importance of having a strong sense of self esteem; it is not having an inflated ego but seeing ourselves realistically. Humility begins with thinking of yourself less. It is not saying we are unimportant in any way, especially in the eyes of God; it is because we know our importance in God’s eyes that we look out o the World differently, from God’s perspective.

Peter Scazzero, in his book ‘Emotionally healthy spirituality’ (pg 149) adapts St. Benedict’s Ladder of humility from 12 to 8 steps. You can judge for yourself where you are on this ladder.

Step 1. Mindfulness of God: we often forget the presence of God, acting as if God were not present in our world or in our lives.

Step 2. Doing God’s will (not our own or other peoples’): We recognize that surrendering our self will to God’s will for our lives touches the very heart of spiritual transformation.

Step 3. Willing to subject ourselves to direction of others: We are free to give up our arrogance and all-powerfulness and are open to accepting God’s will as it comes through others, and we do it without grumbling or with an attitude. To be at ease with following as with leading.

Step 4. Patient to accept the difficulty of others: Life with others, especially within communities, is full of aggravations. This requires we give others a chance to figure out their weakness their own way and in their own time.

Step 5. Radical honesty to others about our weaknesses and faults: We quit pretending to be something we are not. We admit our weaknesses and limitations to a friend, spouse, parent or someone else who cares about our development.

Step 6. Deeply aware of being ‘chief of all sinners’: we see ourselves as potentially weaker and more sinful than anyone around us. We are the chief of all sinners. This is not self-hate or an invitation to abuse, but is meant to make us kind and gentle.

Step 7. Speaking less: Purposeful to speak less (with more restraint). This is near the top of the ladder because it is seen as the outcome of a life that seeks God and is filled with wisdom. As the Rule of St. Benedict states ‘the wise are known for their few words’.

Step 8. Transformed into the Love of God: Here there is no haughtiness, no sarcasm, no put downs, no airs of importance. We are able to embrace our limits and those of others. We are fully aware of how fragile we are and are under no illusions. We are at home with ourselves and content to rely on The Mercy of God. Everything is a gift.