

Humility: A Tool for Loving

If you have an opportunity before attending the talk on November 15, 2020, please read Chapter 7 of the Rule of St. Benedict and then reflect on this modern-day interpretation of the steps of humility adapted by Ramy Shapiro for people experiencing addictions (Emotional Sobriety and Food: <https://emotionalsobrietyandfood.com/about/about-shira/>)

Twelve Steps for Cultivating Humility

St. Benedict's twelve steps for cultivating humility, reworked and simplified here to speak more directly to those of us working the sacred path of recovery:

- 1) Be aware of God's presence always. Remind yourself that if God is everywhere, God is present as everyone. Each encounter is an encounter with God, demanding your utmost respect and attention.
- 2) Place God's will above your own. What is your will? To control life to your own advantage or, when you realize this is impossible, to blind yourself to your powerlessness with addictive behaviors. What is God's will? To liberate you from the places in which you are enslaved. Doing God's will is freeing yourself and helping to free others as well.
- 3) Seek guidance only from those who have your best interests at heart, those who support your liberation from the illusion of power and the addictions it carries with it.
- 4) Be patient and still in the face of difficulties and contradictions, and even personal injustice; respond not from a sense of injured pride or frustrated will, but from a place of objective calm and mindful tranquility.

5) Recognize when evil thoughts arise in your heart; see them for what they are: the chains of enslavement; release them by confessing your dark thoughts and secret sins to a trusted confidant. As the Twelve Step proverb puts it, “We are only as sick as our secrets.”

6) Be content with whatever life brings you, seeing nothing as reward or punishment, and everything as an opportunity to deepen your capacity for humility and the liberation humility brings.

7) Consider yourself lower than others, not in hopes that “the last shall be first” (Matthew 20:16) but in order to help lift the other toward freedom.

8) Do nothing that serves you alone; make all your deeds of benefit to others and the community.

9) Discipline your speech and strengthen your capacity for silence.

10) Avoid silliness, mockery and playing the fool.

11) Speak gently and forthrightly and avoid the fog of words that comes with speech that is designed to deceive.

12) Keep your heart humble and your appearance simple, engaging each moment as an opportunity to release fear and the need to control.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

There will be two periods for reflection during the presentation which will give you an opportunity to consider how the practice of humility has affected your sense of self and your relationships with others. We will consider questions such as:

- What do you like about yourself?
- What would you like to work on to make yourself a better person?
- Is there any relationship between what you like about yourself and what you need to work on?
- Does St. Benedict's teaching on humility help you to understand yourself better and, if so, how?
- Is there a particular area of your life (e.g., work, your experience as a parent or grandparent, caring for someone who is sick, your connection with a particular group or organization) where your study and/or experience of living the *Rule* has impacted your behavior?
- Do you think the practice of humility enables you to become more loving toward yourself and/or others? What examples can you recall?