

PARISHES OF  
**ST PIUS X, ALDERLEY EDGE, ST BENEDICT'S, HANDFORTH**  
**AND**  
**SACRED HEART & ST TERESA'S WILMSLOW**  
**WEEKLY REFLECTION**

**Sunday 5th October 2025: 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Mere Christianity: Christian Behaviour**  
**(5) Pride - The Great Sin**

According to C.S. Lewis in his book "Mere Christianity" pride is the one sin from which nobody is free, which everyone loathes when they see it in others, but rarely recognise it in themselves. Lewis did not think he had ever heard anyone who was not a Christian accuse themselves of this sin. He said he had also very seldom met anyone who was not a Christian show mercy to it in others. Further, that the more we have it in ourselves, the more we dislike it in others.

The opposite of the sin of pride is the virtue of humility. According to Christian teachers the essential vice, the utmost evil, is pride. It was through pride that Lucifer became the Devil. Pride leads to every other vice. It is the complete anti-God state of mind. This is not an exaggeration. The easiest way to discover how proud you are is to ask yourself how much you dislike it when others snub you, patronise you or take no notice of you. The point is that each person's pride is in competition with everyone else's pride. Pride is essentially competitive. It gets pleasure not out of having something, but out of having more of it than the next person. If everyone were by nature, or circumstance, equally rich, or intelligent, or successful, there would be nothing to be proud about. Many of the evils which people put down to greed or selfishness are really far more the result of pride. And pride is often rooted not just in competitiveness but also in the wish for power.

Christians are correct in attributing to pride the chief cause of misery in the world. Other vices may sometimes bring people together. Drunkenness, gluttony or unchastity may exist alongside friendliness and good fellowship. The sin of pride leads to enmity; not only enmity between people but also between people and God. In God we come up against something manifestly superior to ourselves in every way. Unless we know that, we cannot begin to truly know God at all. The Pharisee in the temple prayed thanking God that he was not like the rest of men and then reeled off all the good things he did. If we once begin to feel that our religious life is making us better than others then we are in grave peril through the sin of pride. We must strive to be like the tax collector who "*would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'*"

That leads into some possible misunderstandings about pride:

- (1) Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble person they will appear humble in the sense that they are oily or sycophantic and tell you that they are humble, Uriah Heep-like. They will probably seem to be cheerful and genuinely interested in what you say to them. They will not be thinking about humility or about themselves at all.
  
- (2) Pleasure in being praised is not (of itself) the sin of pride. Nor is pleasure or contentment in having achieved something good and worthwhile. A child praised by a parent for doing something well, or a wife praised by her husband for her courage, is entitled to be pleased. The pleasure lies not in what you are but in the fact that you have pleased somebody you rightly wanted to please. The problem only arises if you pass from thinking “I am so glad I have pleased them” to “What a fine person I am”. In fact the more you delight in yourself and the less you delight in the praise, the worse you become.
  
- (3) If we say (for example) that a man is proud of his son or an institution to which he belongs, is “pride” in that sense a sin? It probably depends on what we mean by “proud of”. An admiration for, or appreciation of, another person or institution, is no sin. But if it means that he regards himself as superior to others by basking in reflected glory then he is (at least) on the way to committing the sin of pride.
  
- (4) God does not forbid pride because he requires humility as due to His own dignity, as if God Himself were proud. God wants us to know Him. He wants to give Himself to us. The more we know God the more we become genuinely humble, having rid ourselves of all the pomposity or self-righteousness that alienates us from Him and makes us unhappy in life.

C.S. Lewis finishes his chapter on pride with this paragraph: *“If anyone would like to acquire humility, I can, I think, tell him the first step. The first step is to realise that one is proud. And a biggish step, too. At least, nothing whatever can be done before it. If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed.”*

Stephen S.