

When we read scripture, we can interpret it in several ways, or senses. We can interpret it literally, that it means exactly what it says. We can interpret it allegorically and ask ourselves what does it mean. The moral sense tells us how to act and the anagogical sense tells us about our ultimate destiny, to be at one with God.

For homilies we usually talk about the moral sense because it is the moral sense that gives us an imperative. It tells us how we should act, right here, right now. What is the lesson scripture teaches us about how to live our daily lives?

In today's Gospel we might feel some sympathy for the servant. He has worked hard all day. He works hard every day. And at the end of the day his work is not over. He is still waiting on the master before he can eat dinner and take his rest.

And Jesus then tells us that the servant should not expect anything in return for doing his duty, no rest, no reward, no special recognition. He is just doing his job.

That might seem cold to us and we might feel sorry for the servant, but we really shouldn't.

We know that God loves us more than we can possibly imagine. He loves us more than our family does, more than our parents do, even more than our spouses do. But His love does not depend on our performance.

God's love for us is complete. It is so total, personal, unconditional and untiring that there is nothing we can do to make His love greater or lesser. We do not have to achieve great things in order for God to love us more.

We should absolutely use our gifts and talents to glorify God and serve our brothers and sisters, that's why we were given those gifts in the first place. But we are called to do the best we can, with the gifts we are given, in the time that we have.

It is even OK for us to take a little pleasure in a job well done or when we experience a little bit of success.

But the meaning of our lives does not come from our achievements. The meaning of our lives is that God created us as an act of love. It was an act of love that redeemed us from our fallen nature, and it is an act of love that guides us onward towards Heaven, a pure, unconditional, outpouring of Divine Love.

“You just work, quietly, carefully, and happily until your job is finished. And then you look forward to seeing how the whole thing looks on the day of the Last Judgment, when the scaffolding comes down, and God invites you in to appreciate the majesty of what He did – and the beauty He let you cooperate in making.” (*John-Mark Miravale, Beauty-What It Is & Why It Matters, Sophia Institute Press.*) We work without worrying about what we will get in return.

God's love does not depend on our achievements. Our achievements flow from knowing how much God loves us and our wanting to return that love out of gratitude.

That is true humility.

And it actually means that we have a great deal of freedom. By responding to love with love it takes the pressure off of us. God will accept what we do if it is done out of love for Him. That is the freedom that comes from being children of God.

This is the lesson that Jesus teaches us today. Rather than let our achievements go to our head, He wants to teach us how to make our achievements flow from our hearts.

There is a whole industry centered around how we can get more done in our lives, but it really is as simple as that.

We all want to make a difference in the world, that is what we were created for. The world is different because we are in it. Whether that difference is good or bad is up to us.

Sometimes we do not live up to what we are capable of because we waste time and energy looking for recognition. But if we learn from our older brothers and sisters, the saints, we learn that they accomplished an amazing amount of good, and never worried about credit or recognition.

Pope St. Leo the Great is an example of this.

Leo was the Archdeacon of Pope Sixtus III. The archdeacon was the one who knew how everything worked. Today that role is filled by a priest and we call him the Vicar General. But in the 5th century it was a deacon. While Leo was away on a diplomatic mission, Sixtus died and Leo was appointed to succeed him. On his return, within a matter of days, Leo was consecrated a priest, then a bishop, and then pope.

The 5th century was a particularly difficult time to be pope. The Roman empire was crumbling, and so the Church had to step up and deal with civil order as well as Church order.

In the West, Leo had to play peacemaker between imperial generals in order to avoid a civil war. In the East he had to battle heresies promulgated by arrogant emperors. And to top it all off, Attila the Hun threatened to invade and destroy the city of Rome.

The roman emperor was useless and so as the barbarians approached Rome, Leo went out to meet them with a small retinue of clergy. We don't know exactly what he said to Attila, but whatever it was it caused this so-called "Scourge of God" to withdraw from Rome and all of Italy.

It was his humility that allowed Leo to not only keep his balance amid that hurricane of cataclysmic crises, but even to calm the storm, over and over.

When we simply work to please God, and not worry about recognition, we become truly free and are able to accomplish great things in the world.

Or as President Ronald Reagan once said, “There is no limit to the amount of good you can do if you don't care who gets the credit.”

To free us from this enslavement of seeking credit for everything we do, we need to strengthen our prayer life. Through prayer we discover how much God truly cares about us. Through prayer we can free ourselves of our anxious pursuit of recognition.

It is not about spending hours and hours in the Church. For most of us that is not our vocation, that is not what God wants from us. Rather it is about taking small chunks of time each day to spend with Christ.

Let us give Jesus a chance to win us over, to teach us His wisdom, and to heal our interior, spiritual wounds.

Do not underestimate the power of prayer.

You may have heard or seen a recent article that portrayed the Rosary as a weapon of Catholic extremists. All the author really managed to do was to show how little the media understands us. The Rosary is indeed a weapon, it is a weapon of prayer.

On Friday, October 7, we will celebrate the feast-day of Our Lady of the Rosary. The memorial was established in 1571 when Catholics all over Europe prayed for a victory of the Christian naval forces against those of the Muslim Turkish empire in what has come to be called the Battle of Lepanto.

In addition to the prayers of the faithful all across Europe, the leader of the Christian forces led his ship in praying the Rosary before the battle. As the prayers of the soldiers and sailors drifted over the water, ship after ship took up the prayer until all 65000 men on over two hundred ships prayed together for victory.

Their prayers were answered in less than 5 hours of fighting and Pope Pius V gave thanks to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary by instituting the Feast of Our Lady of Victory, which we now know as the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

We all have battles to face in our lives, and prayer is a powerful weapon to help us achieve victory in those battles. Because nothing is more powerful than true humility, and a prayer from the heart.