



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



ordinary
time



lectionary
reading

Cycle B

Twenty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time

Lectionary #128

Reading I: Isaiah 35:4-7a

This passage from the prophet Isaiah shows the tiny nation of Israel awaiting what seems to be certain annihilation by the great and strong Assyrian nation. Isaiah calls the nation of Israel to live in **humility** and to trust in God to fulfill the promise he made to his chosen people. Here, **humility** requires trusting that, even in the face of a foreign attack, defeat, and captivity, it will be God's will that triumphs in the end. For us, **humility** means recognizing that there is one creator, God, and that we are God's creation. This helps us remember that all strengths that we have truly belong to God. When we view these strengths and talents in this way, we can live **humbly** with our God.

Reading 2: James 2:1-5

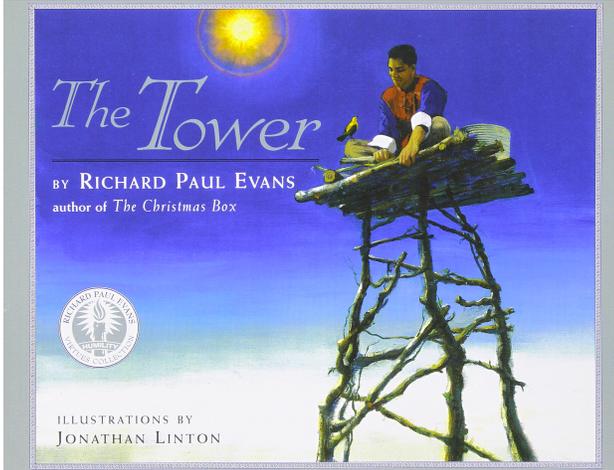
Saint James calls those who follow Christ to be **humble** and gracious to ALL. He counsels all of the followers of Christ to live in a way that manifests love for everyone, especially the poor and those that society marginalizes because of how they look or due to their social status. The virtue of **humility** calls us to live in a way that we are able to see God's image in each and every person so that we can treat them with dignity and respect.

Gospel: Mark 7:31-37

In this particular healing, Jesus takes the deaf man *off by himself away from the crowd* in order to heal him. Jesus performs the healing in a **humble** way so as not to draw attention to himself. Jesus' primary concern is for the man, not for personal attention. Time and again, we will see the Jesus' **humility** as he attends to the needs of others. Although Jesus orders the man not to tell anyone what happened, the man cannot control his overwhelming joy and is compelled to share his encounter with Jesus. The implication here is that when we have been touched by Christ, we are not able to be silent; we are driven to speak about the glories of what God has done for us through Jesus Christ.



children's
story



The Tower: A Story of Humility

Written by Richard Paul Evans

Illustrated by Jonathan Linton

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character
education
activity

**Do you wish to rise? Begin by
descending. You plan a tower
that will pierce the clouds?
Lay first the foundation of
humility.**

-Saint Augustine

The Tower: A Story of Humility

In the children's book *The Tower: A Story of Humility*, we meet a young man who wants nothing more than to be great. He believes that he can only achieve this goal when everyone in the village where he lives looks up to him. In order to make this happen, he constructs a tower that reaches into the clouds. However, by doing this, he finds that he is isolated and lonely. One day, a passing bird tells the young man about an old woman who is greater than he is. So the man descends from his tower and searches for this woman. He finds that she is a poor woman content with feeding a flock of birds. She shares with the young man that being great is not about being higher than anyone, but rather about lifting others higher. This advice sends the young man out to do truly great things by serving others.

Activity: Power Struggle

Step One: Share the following rhyme with the students. Each student will take a turn being a particular creature and will use the following rhyme:

*There once was a **flea** who spoke right out loud,
I'm so big! I'm so big! I'm as big as that cloud!*

The entire class will then respond with these words:

*Hey, little buddy, said God with a wink,
You're really not quite as big as you think!
I hate to disappoint you, but I have a strong hunch
There are quite a few others that could eat you for lunch!*

Step Two: After the class has made God's response to the flea, each student will have a chance to think of a creature that is just a little bit larger when they say the first line. For example, the next creature might be a spider. The game continues until the largest creature is spoken and everyone has had a turn.

Step Three: When the game has concluded, take some time with the students to help them understand that God is bigger and more powerful than all the creatures that they named, and that God is the creator of all these creatures. This will help the students understand that **humility** has everything to do with seeing ourselves in relation to God who created everything, including us.

True humility calls us to recognize and hold an awareness that we are absolutely dependent on Christ.



case study

**Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.**

What could you do today?

Think about and thank God each time someone gives you a compliment. By doing this, you are recognizing that God is the one who has given you all the gifts and talents that you have. For example, if someone says that you are a great athlete, acknowledge God by saying: "Thank you God for giving me the gifts that make me able to be an athlete. May my use of these gifts offer praise and glory to you."

Look Feel Know Act

People sometimes forget about God and the role that God plays in our lives, which can result in being prideful. Having too much pride means that we do not recognize that all that we have is a gift from God. When this happens, we can develop what is often referred to as a "Big Head." Recognizing that God made us can help us remember that God deserves thanks and praise from us often. Once we remember this, we can act in a **humble** manner by consistently thanking and praising God for all that we have.

The Tower is a wonderful story about the virtues of **humility** that parallels the attitudes, focus, and people in the Scripture selected for this Sunday's readings. In the first reading, Prophet Isaiah exemplifies the importance of **humility** through his words to the people of Israel; similarly, in the Gospel, Jesus acts out of **humility** as he performs a healing miracle. The virtue of **humility** is crucial to living a fulfilling and faithful life that glorifies God and God's creation. Today, living with **humility** may be a great challenge. It is critical that we take time daily to discuss and reflect on the importance of living a **humble** life while paying attention to things that might call us away from living out the virtue of **humility**.



closing tool

Lord God, grant me the humility of your Son, Jesus Christ. Help me to never be prideful but rather to always seek you as my creator and to always be aware that I am your creation. Amen.



**Santa Clara
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