

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



“Lifting up his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed.....”

I once spent a few days retreat in a Benedictine Monastery, accompanied by a friend of mine, David, a married father of eight children from the Bronx. David had never been to a monastery before. When meal time came we entered the refectory in silence with the monks, and then sat down with them at a long table. A prayer was said, and David, lifting up his eyes and seeing all the food on the table, reached out to take a piece of bread. Quick as a flash the little old monk sat next to him smacked him on the back of his hand. We were both startled. The monk smiled and then leaned over and whispered: ‘here you do not serve yourself, but others.’

We then observed that none of the monks helped themselves. They looked to see what others needed, and then passed food to them. In this way, each person at table was served by someone else. In this way everyone ate.

The Fathers of the church said we should lift up our eyes for two reasons: to help others, or to ask for help ourselves. Jesus often ‘lifts up his eyes’. When speaking to his disciples for example, he never looks down at them, but in lifting up his eyes upon them has the attitude of one who considers others superior to himself.

Someone who knew this secret was Cardinal Rafael Merry Del Val. Born of Spanish parents, diplomats, while they were stationed overseas in London, he became a priest, bishop and then Cardinal. The ‘Merry’ in his surname comes from a line of Irish merchants from County Waterford, Ireland, who settled in Seville, Spain in the eighteenth century. Cardinal Merry Del Val wrote what has come to be known as the Litany of Humility, a prayer he used to say every day after Mass:

*O Jesus meek and humble of heart, Hear me.
From the desire of being esteemed, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being loved, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being extolled, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being honored, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being praised, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being preferred to others, Deliver me Jesus.
From the desire of being consulted, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being approved, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being humiliated, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being despised, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of suffering rebukes, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being calumniated, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being forgotten, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being ridiculed, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being wronged, Deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being suspected, Deliver me, Jesus.*

*That others may be loved more than I, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be esteemed more than I, Jesus grant me the grace to desire it.
That in the opinion of the world, others may increase, and I may decrease,
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be chosen and I set aside, Jesus grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be praised and I unnoticed, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be preferred to me in everything, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may become holier than I, provided that I become as holy as I should,
Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

When we lift up our eyes today, may it be to look up to the Lord, or to seek to help others.

Fr. Sean