

I'm a pretty humble man, which is a good thing for a Franciscan, but I'm not always so humble. When there is praise and affirmation to be given out, I'm there more often than not, trying, even if unconsciously, to get all the praise and glory for myself.

Usually, it's about how someone challenges me about how I do something or when they dare to say they have a better way of doing something. But sometimes it's more subtle than that, and it's more about someone else not getting praise for something.

For example- this happened several years ago, and I'm still ashamed and embarrassed about it. I was home on vacation, and as I do when I'm home on vacation, I cook every night. And I was making chicken parmigiana- as any good Italian-American boy would do- and my poor mom wanted to help me make it- just washing some dishes and breading some chicken and peeling some garlic- and I said *no*- a pretty emphatic *no*- and I practically chased her out of the kitchen- her kitchen. I wanted the glory of making that dish and having my family compliment **me**- and of course my mother got upset and hurt in the process and it just wasn't worth it.

And sometimes in my ministry as pastor, I have to admit I get hurt if I don't get acknowledged for all that I do, and in my Capuchin fraternity I get upset if the other guys don't do something like I want them to do it- like filling the dishwasher. Well, Salvatore, you know what, get over it.

The paradox is of course that we should have pride- pride in ourselves and who we are and what we can do and what we have done and the unique, particular beauty that each one of us has. That's the good kind of pride- but the exaggerated, misplaced kind of pride I'm talking about makes us forget that everybody else is as good as we are and everybody can do as much as we can do and everybody has their own unique, particular beauty. Exaggerated and misplaced

pride can make us forget that God loves us all equally; that God has no favorites; that we are all members of the one Body of Christ. Exaggerated and misplaced pride can make us forget that other persons have other ways of doing things and of seeing the world that is just as good as mine- and that's OK- that's wonderful actually.

In that reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, we're warned about boasting- about taking the credit for everything and thinking that what we do is inherently superior to what every one else can do, and perhaps what is the most harmful for ourselves and for our relationship with God and with the people around us, that we don't need anybody. *I can do it all on my own and I don't need you to help me and I don't want you to help me.* And you know what can happen then- you learn the hard way that it's not true- that we can't always do it on our own and it doesn't make us any less good or any less talented or any less wonderful to have someone help us. Like we would gladly help them.

And I think God is trying to get us to see beyond our own way of doing things- to see that we are not diminished if someone else is raised up- if anything, when one person is raised up, so are all the other people who are connected with that person. As Jesus said, *"The one who humbles himself will be exalted."* And St. Paul said, *"If one part (of the body) suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy."*

St. Francis composed what are called "the Admonitions" for his brothers so that they could use the wisdom that he had acquired the hard way and learn how to live a good and holy and virtuous life. The 20th Admonition reads: *"Blessed is the servant who esteems himself no better when he is praised and exalted by people than when he is considered worthless, simple, and despicable, for what a man is before God, that he is and nothing more."*

So for Francis humility is not beating oneself up or seeing yourself as worthless- it's seeing yourself as God see you- seeing with the eyes of God and that can change everything. That can be liberating because it frees us from the thoughts that run around and around in our head that tell us we're no good and that we can't do anything right. It doesn't go to the extreme either and make us think that we should boast about everything either- to use an old expression, that we're the best thing since sliced bread.

But it gives us a clear, objective sense of who we are and how much we are loved- and then you're not so easily hurt and you don't so easily hurt anyone else either.