

- C.S. Lewis once said: “As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down you cannot see something that is above you.”
- Here in 21st century America, we live in a society in which, every year, pollsters tell us that the number of people who know God, who believe in God and practice Christianity, is declining, especially amongst the younger generations.
- Every year, more and more people claim they do not believe in God or have any real use for Him. Many of them proudly revel in their supposed freedom from God and religion, and smugly scoff at those who live by faith.
- In their pride they look down on others, and in so doing fail to know the glorious God above them, Who so wants them to experience His love and mercy. And in failing to know God, they endanger their immortal souls.
- For knowing God is important if we want to go to Heaven.
- If we do not know God, how can we praise Him as He so richly deserves? If we do not know God, how can we have any chance of being like Him, which is the real end for which man has been created?
- If we do not know God, how can we ask Him for His mercy, which is the only remedy for our sins? So, if we do not know God, how can we hope to be saved by Him?

- As the C.S. Lewis quote I mentioned states that pride will keep us from knowing God as we should, it stands to reason that knowing God requires some measure of humility.
- Our epistle today teaches us the need for humility, especially in regard to our sins. In this beautiful passage, St. Paul speaks of how God’s grace has been abundant in his life.
- Though he was: “once a blasphemer and a persecutor and arrogant,” God has treated him with mercy. But this is so because St. Paul recognized how sinful he was.
- You may say, “Well, St. Paul was given a special grace by God, Who knocked him off his horse.” And this is true: St. Paul was confronted directly by Jesus, Who asked Paul why he was persecuting Him.
- Yet, even so, St. Paul was at least humble enough in that moment to accept God’s grace. For while God’s grace is powerful and potent, our wills – warped by wicked pride – can always resist God’s grace.
- God never forces His grace upon us, and He didn’t force it on St. Paul. In that transformative moment, a wicked Saul accepted and cooperated with God’s grace, and became a saintly Paul.
- Moreover, just because Jesus has never appeared to us as He did to St. Paul is no excuse. St. Paul tells us today: “Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners,” which means that God wants all men to be saved, for all men are sinners.
- Therefore, we can be confident that each of us is given every grace we need in this life to be saved. Our Lord never fails to provide ample opportunity and grace for each person to know his sins, to repent of them, and to receive God’s healing mercy.
- Our problem is that we often resist God’s grace, and we do so because we are proud. We refuse to know God because we are too caught up in ourselves.

- Think of the story of the Prodigal Son that we hear in today's Gospel. Here we are presented with a young man who thinks only of himself and his own pleasure.
- He asks his father to give him his inheritance so that he can go off and live a self-serving and dissipated life. And in doing so, he manages to squander everything.
- Yet, finally this son recognizes his sinfulness, and he finds the humility to return to his father in repentance. And in proof of his sincerity and his desire to make amends, he offers to live as a servant to his father.
- Now, we know how this story ends. At the sign of his son's repentance, the father is filled with compassion, embraces his son, and lavishes him with gifts. Of course, this father is symbolic of our heavenly Father, who lavishes us with mercy when we repent!
- God the Father is constantly on the lookout for His proud and wayward sheep who have gotten lost in pursuit of their own pleasure, for God takes no delight in our damnation. He wants to save us. He wants to show us His mercy.
- The Gospel is ever so clear that God is in pursuit of us in order to save us from our sins.
- But receiving God's mercy requires the humility to know our sins, to repent of them, and to approach God with a willingness to make amends for those sins.
- And the more humbly we recognize our sins, the more mercy we receive! This is why we must constantly be on guard against the sin of pride, which can be ever so subtle.
- For it is pride that makes us intent on doing our own will rather than God's will. Yet, we cannot enter into Heaven until our wills are perfectly aligned with His will.
- Brothers and sisters: each of us is a sinner. So, each of us must examine ourselves to recognize those personal golden calves that we worship. Each of us must ask to what degree pride prevents us from looking up and knowing God as we should.
- And thus, each of us must keep working to cultivate the ever-important virtue of humility. To this end, Mother Teresa – whose feast day was just this past week – gives us some very practical advice that we would do well to follow.
- She tells us:

“These are the few ways we can practice humility: To speak as little as possible of one's self. To mind one's own business. Not to want to manage other people's affairs. To avoid curiosity. To accept contradictions and correction cheerfully. To pass over the mistakes of others. To accept insults and injuries. To accept being slighted, forgotten and disliked. To be kind and gentle even under provocation. Never to stand on one's dignity. To choose always the hardest.”

(Mother Teresa, [The Joy in Loving: A Guide to Daily Living](#))
- In practicing humility in these ways, may we become humble enough to know God, to know our sins, and to repent of them.
- St. Teresa of Calcutta, pray for us!