

August 31, 2025



Photo by Sr. Karin Nürnberg, CSJ, from the Abbey St. Hildegard in Eibingen, Germany

THE LESSONS OF SOIL

By Julie Mussché

Excerpt from Today's First Reading and Today's Gospel

*“My child, conduct your affairs with humility,
and you will be loved more than a giver of gifts.
Humble yourself the more, the greater you are,
and you will find favor with God.”*

SIRACH 3:17-18

*On a sabbath Jesus went to dine
at the home of one of the leading Pharisees,
and the people there were observing him carefully.*

*He told a parable to those who had been invited,
noticing how they were choosing the places of honor at the table.
“When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet,
do not recline at table in the place of honor.*

*A more distinguished guest than you may have been invited by him,
and the host who invited both of you may approach you and say,
'Give your place to this man,'
and then you would proceed with embarrassment
to take the lowest place.
Rather, when you are invited,
go and take the lowest place
so that when the host comes to you he may say,
'My friend, move up to a higher position.'
Then you will enjoy the esteem of your companions at the table.
For every one who exalts himself will be humbled,
but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."
Then he said to the host who invited him,
"When you hold a lunch or a dinner,
do not invite your friends or your brothers
or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors,
in case they may invite you back and you have repayment.
Rather, when you hold a banquet,
invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind;
blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you.
For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."*

LUKE 14:1, 7-14

Reflection

What powerful readings today! The virtue of humility is featured as a quality of the righteous. The word origin -- *humus*, of the earth or soil, lowly -- has always added meaning to my interpretation of the intention of the word. Let's dig into it, shall we?

What makes good soil, earth that is healthy and supportive of life? There is comparability to having an enriching sense of humility. Really good soil is filled with air or oxygen, allowing plant life to breathe and water to move freely. This reminds me of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to help guide embracing the humble path. There is also water present in healthy loam, the necessity of life, carrying the nutrients needed to sustain existence. Is there not a comparability with prayer and spiritual practice as helping to enliven our sense of humility? Organic matter also features into the balance of good dirt as it offers stability, potential for growth and absorption of water. This brings to mind the opportunity for spiritual renewal and refreshment for deepening a posture of humility through living in community, ritual, and ongoing spiritual development. Lastly, the essence of soil is mineral matter which comprises the

largest component. The building blocks of the personality of a particular soil and the stuff of its origins, to me this relates to the core of each person and their foundation story. In many respects, this influences our capacity for growth and surrender to God, our sense of identity in and being loved by God, all key aspects of embracing the virtue of humility.

To be humble, walking the earthly path, certainly requires ongoing effort. I am reminded of a country song from the 1980s, “Oh Lord it’s Hard to be Humble,” and laugh at the situation of being human and the ongoing openings for growth. The first and Gospel readings today certainly offer salient guidance and examples for what it means to be humble and righteous. Oh Lord, please show me the way.



Pineville, MO
Photo by Julie Mussché

For Pondering

- How do you feel about what Jesus is instructing in the Gospel reading today?
- What does the idea of “resurrection of the righteous” say to you?

- Thinking back, who are the people in your life that lived into Jesus's guidance and influenced you to do the same?
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For Prayer

*Lord,
grant that I may always allow myself to be guided by you,
always follow your plans,
and perfectly accomplish your Holy Will.*

ST. TERESA OF AVILA

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