

In recent news, scientists at NASA using the Kepler space telescope have discovered 500 new planets, out of which 12 are in what they call the 'habitable zone' – that is, in a place where life could be sustained. Of those 12, there is one that is situated roughly the same distance from its star as the earth is from the sun. Before you consider relocating, however, scientists say that the surface gravity would likely be twice that of our own planet, but their hope is to further discover volcanic activity.

In the Creation account in Genesis, the Lord God creates from the dust of the earth the first man – whom we know as Adam. There is a certain play on words here, because the Hebrew word for man is *adam*, and the Hebrew word for earth is *adamah*. In a sense, Adam could be said to be the first earthling.

Likewise, a similar word-play, or perhaps better said as word origin is the word *humble*. Its roots are from Middle English, Old French, and Latin from the word *humus* which means *ground* or *earth*, and because the ground is 'down there,' it also means *low* or *lowly*.

In today's Gospel, Our Lord tells the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. We see two examples here: one of extreme pride, and the other of great humility. Now a publican was a government contractor, and in ancient Rome a publican was a member of the lower of the two aristocratic classes. Lower, indeed, but most certainly still an aristocrat. Yet here, in the parable, it is the publican – the aristocrat – who displays humility.

According to Google Search, the word *humble* is on the way out. Not that it was very popular to begin with. It peaked 200 years ago representing 6/100ths (six one-hundredths) of a percent usage in English, and now only representing 1/100ths (one one-hundredths) of a percent usage in modern times. While humility wasn't spoken of much, even in its hey day, in our own time it is certainly not a very popular word.

In our own day and age pride seems to be making a comeback. The word *arrogant* dipped for a time about 100 years ago, but has seen a resurgence in the past century.

How much does God value humility, one may ask. Our Lord's own words indicate that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Indeed, Saint Alphonsus Liguori, whose Feast Day is today, said that no virtue can abide in a soul without that soul first embracing humility. He went on to say that in heaven there is no soul without humility. While there may be some who were lacking in prudence, or perseverance, or another of the virtues ... the absence of humility seems to be a show-stopper.

Not that Saint Alphonsus is a canonical source, but his words are important for us to reflect on.

Digging a bit deeper into today's readings, we hear in St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians that no one can curse Our Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit, but that only by the power of God's Holy Spirit can they proclaim that Jesus is Lord.

What does this mean?

Over the past century and into the present, people seem more and more prone to proclaim themselves as *lord*. Many it appears have no time for Jesus or God as their *lord*. Rather, people seem hell-bent on serving themselves or serving their passions at the expense of any consideration of a higher power.

Yet it is imperative for us, as earthlings – humans – created in the image of God, to realize our place in Eternity. To humble ourselves in the sight of God, and beg for His mercy. Surrounded by the chaotic arrogance of our times, it is crucial that we pray for the graces of humility, lest we join the rest of society on the road to perdition.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ – let us pray for an increase in all the virtues, but especially in the virtue of humility. May we recognize our place before Almighty God in time and in eternity. And if this causes us to tremble, let us recognize that it is God who calls us His sons and daughters, who sent us His Son, so that we might experience His abundant mercy in our lives.