

In his book, *“Why Leadership Sucks,”* author Miles Anthony Smith builds on the research of consultant Jim Collins, who roughly 15 years ago researched a couple dozen companies that “defied gravity.” What he discovered after five years of study was that greatness as defined by not only experts ... but also in the eyes of most people ... what the majority thought of as “greatness” ... was missing an essential element. Collins coined the term “Level 5 Leadership” to indicate the element that allowed run-of-the-mill groups rise to greatness. And the missing element was not what anyone expected.

Level 1 was a highly capable individual. You’ve got to have the skills ... but that’s not enough.

Level 2 was a team player. You need to work with others ... but even that wasn’t enough.

Level 3 was a good organizer. You need to put it all together ... but still, you’re only at 60%.

Level 4 was a high performer. You need to work hard ... and this may be “good,” but it isn’t “great.”

The element that was seen in all Level 5 individuals ... and was missing in all the rest ... that ... element ... was ... HUMILITY.

Regardless of their skills, teamwork, organization, or performance ... individuals who lacked humility were unable to build enduring greatness ... and despite their skills ... and their hard work ... their overall performance in the real world ... basically ... “sucked.”

And if that was news after years of research by experts ... it seems that it was already known to anyone who cared to look at Scripture.

Today’s first reading from Sirach was written 200-300 years before the time of Christ. And the exhortation to humility could just as easily be found in these recent works on success and leadership.

In the Letter to the Hebrews, we hear a distinction being drawn between the Old Covenant ... where only Moses was allowed on the mountain with God, while everyone else stood at a distance to watch; and the

New Covenant ... where all the faithful are called to a heavenly banquet ... to fellowship ... with God ... in the Sacraments ... most especially the Eucharist. God's table is not for a few, but for all.

And in the Gospel, Jesus speaks to us in the *Parable of the Banquet*. Where He points out that the tendency of individuals to aspire to greatness in His own time .. to push themselves to the front ... to compete for the higher positions ... would result in the opposite effect.

*For every one who exalts himself will be humbled,  
but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.*

But Jesus doesn't stop there. Because, even the hosts of these banquets ... would invite the movers and the shakers of their time ... as a way that (they hoped) some of this "greatness" might rub off on them. Jesus' exhortation in this case is to:

*invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind;  
blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you.*

And so it would seem, looking to "suck up" in order to get favors ... even that ... doesn't make the cut.

In our efforts to "*conduct [our] affairs with humility*" as Sirach tells us, we have the ultimate model in Our Savior Jesus Christ. And whether we're looking for worldly excellence ... or if we are aspiring to spiritual excellence ... the key to any excellence or greatness is humility.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray for the graces we need to put aside all pride, and to see ourselves as we are before God ... "*poor ... crippled ... lame ... blind*" ... knowing that God loves us, and desires our greatness ... we can be honest about who we are ... we can be truly humble ... regardless of our situation or conditions.

And through the graces of this Mass, and our willingness to humble ourselves as Christ humbled Himself ... to be who we really are ... in humility ... with Christ ... we can aspire ... with God's help ... to fellowship at the banquet of God ... on earth at this altar ... and at the Messianic banquet ... in eternity.