

Cambridge University researchers, Thomas Fink and Yong Mao, wrote a book in 1999 based on two mathematical papers that they had published at the university's Cavendish Laboratory. Their research, focusing on random walks on triangular lattices, with constraints on the initial and final conditions proved that there are 85 ways to tie a necktie. The book, titled *The 85 Ways to Tie a Tie*, presents their research in a popularized format, and enumerates these 85 ways to tie a tie.

Ties have been on the decline in recent years. When I went to school, no male teacher would be caught without a tie or even a jacket. And when I began working in industry, every guy wore ties and jackets.

My personal favorite way to tie a tie is called the Full-Windsor ... or Double-Windsor ... or what the authors refer to as "The Windsor." I always thought it looked nice, and I even figured out how to tie it while steering with my knees and driving a car.

According to the book, "The Windsor" knot qualifies as both symmetrical and self-releasing.

Which, it turns out is important. Ties can be hazardous to your health. A tie can get tangled up in machinery, or caught in a door, or can catch fire ... you can tie a tie too tight, and cut off your oxygen supply; or even, according to some doctors, exacerbate the symptoms of glaucoma ... and the noble necktie can even become a vector for spreading contagious diseases ... flapping around like a fashionable "Typhoid Mary" around your neck, spreading germs here and there.

I even remember "Power Ties." Which usually meant a bold, but not too flashy color ... with perhaps a subdued or muted pattern or stripes.

In today's first reading, we hear of how God's omnipotence is translated into his mercy. God's overwhelming power ... doesn't overwhelm us ... because of He is merciful ... and allows us the room ... and the time ... to repent. Just because God has all the power ... He doesn't necessarily wield it without reservation. Rather, He tempers His omnipotence, not stepping in and exacting justice ... but holding back ... showing patience, and mercy, and love.

In holding back His power, God gives us the freedom to make correct choices ... or to correct our past choices ... calling us to conversion ... and allowing us the opportunity for repentance.

St. Paul continues this theme in the Second Reading, exhorting us to rely on God's grace ... and not to get tied up in all sorts of other things. He speaks of an "*effort of faith*" which is our side of the equation ... which then allows God's grace to take over ... and with God's grace acting in our lives ... God is "*glorified in [us]*".

In other words, we need to rely on God's power acting in our lives to make the right choices and to repent of our failings.

In the Gospel, we hear the story of Zacchaeus ... a wealthy tax collector. In his day and age, he was a very powerful man. Zacchaeus wants a front row seat, and climbs a tree to see Jesus passing by.

Jesus calls Zacchaeus to "*come down quickly*" ... which we could take as a call to humility ... to "come down" from his lofty view of himself, and get into the thick of things ... realizing that he is one of the crowd ... and like everyone, a regular person

Our Lord's call to Zacchaeus leads to his own conversion and repentance.

The name Zacchaeus means "*pure*" and "*righteous*" ... which can be used as an analogy that when we abuse power ... God's power ... or our own power ... we lose our righteousness ... and we forfeit our purity ... our purity of intention ... and our own purity of heart

The proper use of power requires humility ... and mercy ... and love ... in order to truly be effective both spiritually ... and materially. Our best option is to rely on God's power in our lives ... and through his grace we can grow ... each day ... in holiness and virtue.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray to "*come down*" from any pedestals we might stand on ... let us repent of attachments to worldly power ... or ways we may be using God's power in a worldly way ... and rely on God's grace ... and God's mercy ... and God's love ... in our lives ... and with those we deal with out in the world ... every day.