

In school ... in business ... in the military ... just about everywhere ... there are - well, I don't want to use the word that comes to mind ... but a few synonyms are:

apple-polisher, backscratcher, bootlicker, doer, fawner, flatterer, flunky, kowtowel, lackey, yes-man

I think you know what I'm talking about - someone who wants to get ahead without working hard for it. These individuals try to advance without effort or skill - but rather through flattery and fawning those in authority.

In both readings today we hear that such things don't really work with God. After all, what can we give the author of all things to make him like us more? What can we make to bribe the creator of the universe. How do we flatter almighty God?

In the Preface we pray to God the Father:

*... you have no need of our praise,
... our thanksgiving is itself your gift,
... our praises add nothing to your greatness,
but profit us for salvation,*

A very apt description - that our gratitude to God comes from God himself as a gift of grace; and our praise of God is for our own benefit.

In a sense, what we can do to make ourselves more suited for life here as sons and daughters of God; as well as for the life to come is to follow the admonition of St. James who tells us:

*So submit yourselves to God.
Resist the Devil, ...
Draw near to God, ...
Cleanse your hands, ...
and purify your hearts, ...*

These are ways that we can demonstrate that we know that God is in charge, and not us. The best summary is the last line of St. James' letter:

*Humble yourselves before the Lord
and he will exalt you.*

Humility doesn't mean humiliation. Rather humility means knowing who we are in the sight of God, and acting accordingly.

And so, as we are but hours away from the Holy Season of Lent, let us ask God for the graces we need to know ourselves from His perspective. And let us acknowledge that God is God, and that we are not. And let that be our starting point for the next several weeks of penitential preparation for Easter.