

Homily based on the readings from October 15, 2025 (Romans 2.1-11;
Luke 11.42-46)

In today's Gospel, we witness Christ's continued denunciation of the scribes and the Pharisees – his response to the *shallowness* of their religious practices. These men are constantly showing off their purported piety – making spectacles of themselves for everyone to see, yet rarely engaging with the true spirit of their faith. They are clearly seeking the *world's* esteem, rather than God's, and hence are in grave danger of abandoning their *heavenly* reward in favor of an *earthly* one.

First-century Judaism was quite different from twenty-first-century Christianity, but there are still substantial parallels. I am sure we have all encountered major religious figures – either in person or by reputation – who speak one way and act another. It is easy to spot members of the clergy (of whatever denomination) who tell people to be generous, but who themselves amass great personal wealth; who advocate austerity and simplicity, but who maintain a lavish lifestyle;

who preach patience and kindness, but who practice petulance and anger. To be clear, these tendencies might be most visible among ordained ministers, but they are just as prevalent among the laity. Spiritual hypocrisy is always a deadly contagion, whenever and wherever it manifests itself.

The antidote to hypocrisy, of course, is humility – but we need to be careful not to misinterpret what that means. Humility does not necessitate living in poverty or wearing shabby clothes, nor does it require being obsessed with our own inferiority. Humility is about directing our attention outwards – focusing on our obligations to the community and on the individuals we are hoping to serve. As C. S. Lewis put it:

Do not imagine that if you meet a really humble man he will be what most people call “humble” nowadays: he will not be a sort of greasy, smarmy person, who is always telling you that, of course,

he is nobody. ... He will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all.

Over the centuries, the Church has provided us with countless examples of authentic humility, but one of the most impressive right now – at least from my perspective – is actually our Holy Father. He certainly does not walk around all day in sackcloth and ashes – in fact, for the most part, he generally looks rather dapper. Nevertheless, whenever we see him wearing the vestments of his office, it is clear that he is not doing so out of any *personal* desire – but because he is allowing himself to be subsumed into his ministry. His most profound act of humility is to let Robert Prevost fade away and Pope Leo appear in his place.

In the end – regardless of the responsibilities that are entrusted to us – the less we think about ourselves, the better off we will be. Jesus gave us an incredibly simple set of commandments: “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. ... You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” As long as we

keep *that* perspective at the forefront of our mind, we can never stray *too far* from the path God has set before us.