

This year's presidential campaign will flaunt the virtues of its candidates. We will hear about courage, insight, compassion, and faith. I predict there's one virtue we will not observe. Humility. The humble don't get elected to public office in the United States.

There are other arenas where humility doesn't get you anywhere. An employee who undergoes sexual harassment should not humbly sit back and take it. A high school student receiving verbal abuse from a stepparent should not humbly believe it. An African-American who hears that Jesus took on the form of a slave should not humbly aspire to do the same. There are times when humility doesn't seem like much of a virtue at all.

St. Paul urged the Philippians to take on the attitude of Christ. You could ask, "Which attitude might that be? Jesus had lots of attitude." Indeed. He was cocky with scribes and pharisees. He was caring to the crippled. He was prayerful before his father. He was kingly with his disciples. Which attitude of Christ should we take on?

Paul says humility. That virtue attended the beginning and the end of Jesus' life. At the incarnation he humbled himself to become human. At the passion he humbled himself to accept death on a cross. By accepting a human birth, Jesus accepted a human death.

There are circumstances when we might use other virtues. Jesus did that too. But the virtue which identified him as the Son of God was humility. It's the virtue that inspires us to be kind; to give away what is ours; to donate our time; and to accept illness, defeat, and scorn. As we begin our final week of Lent, let us do so accepting our humanity in a spirit of humility.