

SHARING THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

St. Thomas Aquinas & Humility and Excellence

This month's saint is Thomas Aquinas and our focus is both humility and excellence. This means humbly recognizing both our limitations and our strengths, and striving for excellence in all we do, while at the same time giving glory to God for our abilities and achievements.

IN DEPTH

Humility and Excellence are important virtues. However, humility is often misunderstood as acting like you aren't good enough, and excellence is often misunderstood as having the best things or being the best at something. So these can seem like opposites, but Catholics understand them as connected virtues!

Humility is the recognition of God as the ultimate source of all goodness, truth, and power. So we shouldn't hide our gifts, but celebrate them as something that comes from Him. It is an honest awareness of our relationship to God, ourselves, and others. Excellence is the fulfillment of our God-given potential, which means growing in virtue and living in alignment with God's will. It is not success, but sanctity—becoming the best version of ourselves as He made us to be!

These virtues require honestly admitting our faults, sins, weakness, and limitations, as well as our talents and gifts that God has given us to use for the good of others. Our biggest challenge this month will be overcoming pride and self-sufficiency, so be sure to pray for each other as we face this challenge together!

CONNECTION TO THE SAINT

St Thomas Aquinas is a Doctor of the Church, a title given to those who have made significant contributions to our understanding of the Scriptures. He is known for his great theological work, the *Summa Theologiae*. It is a masterpiece of philosophical and theological study that helped form or support many of the Church's teachings. Many of the hymns he wrote in the 13th century are still sung in Catholic churches around the world, including at the beginning and end of Adoration. However, in speaking of his own work, he described it as nothing but straw compared to the reality of God, and he credited everything good he ever did to God working through him. He understood that God was the true source of his excellence and desired only to do His will and love Him through everything he did, especially his work, study, and interactions with others.



WAYS ADULTS CAN PRACTICE THE VIRTUE

- **Acknowledge Dependence on God:** Begin each day by recognizing that life, talents, and opportunities come from God. This might involve a simple morning prayer asking for guidance and the humility to act according to His will.
- **Practice Self-Awareness and Truthfulness:** Humility involves seeing yourself truthfully—recognizing both strengths and weaknesses. Reflect on areas for growth, but also appreciate your God-given talents and use them to serve others.
- **Embrace Correction and Feedback:** Welcome constructive criticism from others, seeing it as an opportunity to grow. Saints like St. Teresa of Ávila saw humility as accepting both praise and correction gracefully, without letting pride or fear dominate.
- **Spend Time in Prayer and Examination of Conscience:** Regular prayer helps us keep our perspective centered on God's greatness, not our own. Consider setting aside time daily to examine your actions and intentions and ask God for the grace to grow in humility.
- **Develop Virtues Through Daily Habits:** Practice virtues like patience, kindness, and temperance in everyday interactions. Building virtue through small, consistent choices is essential for true excellence. For example, approach challenges at work or home with patience, and strive to respond with charity, even in difficult situations.
- **Cultivate Your Talents:** Excellence means honoring the gifts God has given by developing them. Seek ways to improve skills related to your vocation—whether in your profession, relationships, or other commitments. Excellence grows when we actively work to improve ourselves.
- **Foster Gratitude:** Thanking God regularly for blessings fosters excellence because it keeps your focus on what He's doing in your life. It also helps keep the proper balance between gratitude for achievements and acknowledgment of God's role in every good thing.
- **Rejoice in Others' Success:** Humility means recognizing and celebrating the goodness in others, without jealousy or envy. Compliment and encourage people around you, whether in your family, workplace, or community.