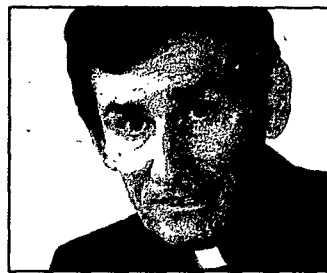


Humility should be superpower characteristic



Father Eugene Hemrick

Making a Difference

"The Bible calls upon great nations to humble themselves, and we should become humble if we want to be partners with the rest of the world. ... What if America leaned on Scripture for its foreign policy? ... The Lord requires of us that we do justice and that we love mercy, and that we walk humbly with our neighbors. Would to God that this becomes our national policy."

This quote, by Tony Campolo, one of the writers in *Spiritual Perspectives on America's Role as Superpower* (SkyLight Paths Publishing, Woodstock, VT, 2003), contains awesome wisdom, which, if practiced, calls for awesome behavior.

The word "humility" comes from the Latin "humus," which means "earth." An excellent and concrete image of the idea of humility is found in the phrase "down to earth." Down-to-earth people know who they really are, have their feet on the ground and don't have their heads in the clouds. Put another way, they are authentic, realistic, simple and make no pretensions.

But the idea of humility goes still deeper. Humility is the realization that nothing is owed to us. If we are blessed with certain powers, they are a gift from God. When we genuflect in honor of God by touching our knee to the earth, we ac-

knowledge God's graces and how lowly we are in comparison to our creator.

As a nation, America has awesome technical and military powers. It also has enormous economic resources. From one perspective, this places us a cut above the other nations. Flexing our muscles can give us a sense of invulnerability and superiority. It is also extremely difficult to be humble with all this power. If this is true, should we simply forget about the kind of advice Campolo gives?

By no means! Not only is his advice on target, but it must be our first means of acting like a true superpower. Or at least we should recognize that the term "superpower" can be understood in a biblical sense.

No doubt our president, military and diplomats know deep down that haughtiness, condescension, arrogance and conceit

will create more terror, not overcome it. These leaders have their jobs cut out for them in seeing that this doesn't happen. But so do we!

We give our children so very much, and rightly so. But do we pass on to them the precious lesson that everything they receive comes ultimately from God and that it is a gift?

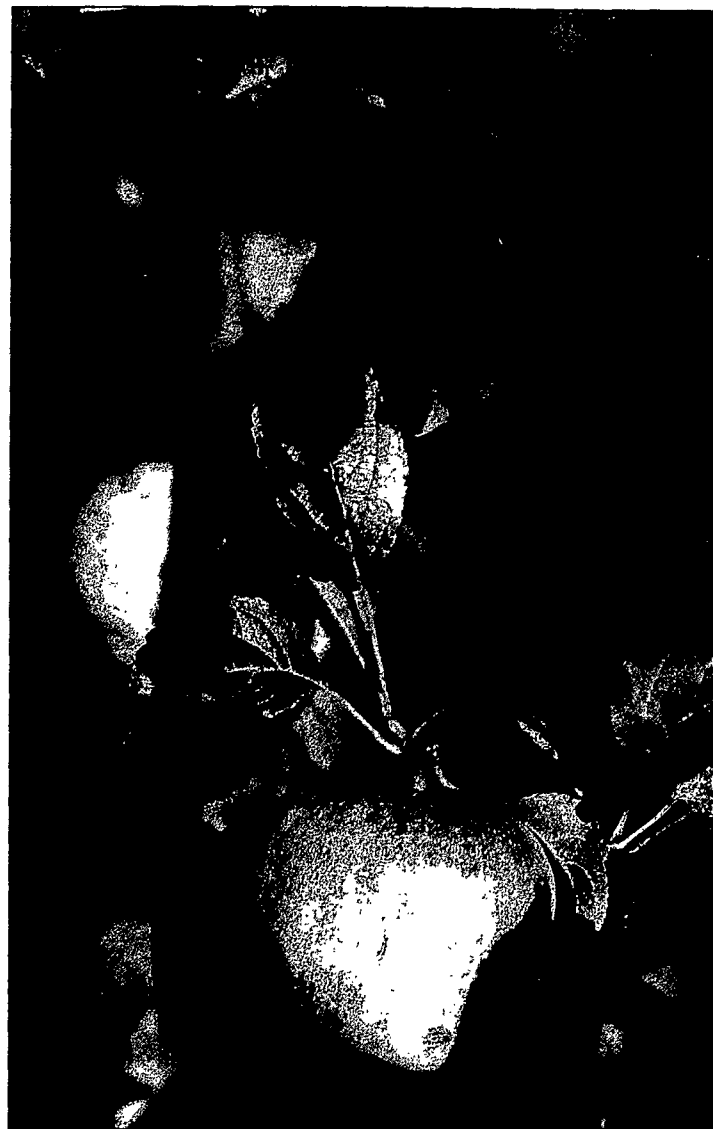
We are blessed with the finest of life's provisions. How often in the course of a day do we thank God for these gifts?

Our nation is rich in all types of resources. When did we last stop to thank God for them?

America has entered a new era in which it finds itself shouldering the awesome responsibilities of being a superpower. One of those responsibilities is to remain humble. Before attempting to exercise our role as a superpower abroad, we must first practice humility at home — in our households, schools, neighborhoods, jobs, with our superstars and in our protection of human rights.

If we start here, we won't need to worry about becoming a despised superpower abroad. Humility is the golden chain that binds humanity together.

Father Hemrick is a columnist for Catholic News Service.



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

More Letters

her parish ("Catholic faith should come before culture," Sept. 4). The Rochester diocese is blessed with a number of priests from various countries — Nigeria, Poland, Uganda, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Kenya, and others — as well as India.

It might not be wise, though, to try to read Father Richard McBrien's mind as he challenges the hierarchy. As I read his article, while he calls no particular culture or country "advanced," he does rightly remind us that there are different cultures within our universal Faith, and differences need to be faced.

I can give you an example of a cultural difference I experienced as a parish priest helping in Kenya, Africa for

a number of years. Learning a different language is difficult for me, and preparing a 10 minute homily each week in Kiswahili, the language that best suited the congregation, took me many hours. But then on Sundays, the people complained (with a Kenyan smile) that my efforts were "too short." I never heard this complaint in the Diocese of Rochester, where I have spent most of my 48 priestly years. Of course, I realize that the priest from India speaks English, probably fluently and distinctly. But all cultural differences need to be honestly and forthrightly examined.

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