

GOSPEL PEARLS

The temptation of vainglory and hypocrisy

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Jesus said to his disciples:

“Take care not to perform righteous deeds

in order that people may see them;

otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.

When you give alms,

do not blow a trumpet before you,

as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets

to win the praise of others.

Amen, I say to you,

they have received their reward.

But when you give alms,

do not let your left hand know what your right is doing,

so that your almsgiving may be secret.

And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

*"When you pray,
do not be like the hypocrites,
who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners
so that others may see them.
Amen, I say to you,
they have received their reward.
But when you pray, go to your inner room,
close the door, and pray to your Father in secret.
And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.*

*"When you fast,
do not look gloomy like the hypocrites.
They neglect their appearance,
so that they may appear to others to be fasting.
Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.
But when you fast,
anoint your head and wash your face,
so that you may not appear to be fasting,
except to your Father who is hidden.
And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you." (Mt 6:1-6, 16-18)*

By deception, we claim the merit for others' achievements to appear better than we really are. Instead we should obey divine will with joy because we make God happy by loving Him directly or in others who are momentarily in difficulty. If, on the other hand, we act for vainglory (by deceiving ourselves) and hypocrisy (by deceiving others), in reality we are trying unsuccessfully to deceive God because He knows exactly what the motivation is behind our good deeds. Let us banish the temptation to be hypocritical in order not to waste the opportunities that divine grace gives us to truly do good.