

N.T. spirituality has to include a **deep and genuine humility** exemplified in the attitude that **even if we NEVER commit sin we still do not earn God.** Does this statement surprise you?

What Jesus Taught About This

The following key parables reveal what our disposition must be like to live an authentic spirituality - to follow Jesus as his disciples.



The Servant Returning from the Fields (Lk.17)

This should make us realise that any good we do **is what is expected of us. It is what we should do!** It forces nothing in return from God.

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Lk.18)

This parable is not really about contrasting pride and humility. The Pharisee is actually a very good man according to the Law. He exceeds the requirements of the Law by fasting twice weekly and shows proper concern for the poor, as tithes were normally used to alleviate suffering. The Tax Collector does not really pray because his eyes are not lifted towards God - he just recognises his nothingness through his despair. Yet Jesus valued him over the Pharisee - he wants us to come before him **with no expectations** so that **he** can make out of that nothingness something marvellous through his love. The parable, therefore teaches the paradox that we are **both nothing and everything** - nothing because of **who we are before God** but everything **because of his love for us** “If God is for us, who can be against us?” as St. Paul said (Rom.8) reiterating Psalm 118.

The Prodigal Son (Lk.15) /The Workers in the Vineyard (Mtt.20)

These parables are meant to show that justice and mercy are, in reality, incompatible virtues, with mercy (unmerited generosity) transcending justice. As far as we are concerned we can only rely on God’s mercy, not expecting anything, just emptying ourselves to receive his love.

Our Catholic Faith Prayer and Spirituality 2010-2011

7. The Spirituality of the New Testament



1. How can a Christ-centred spirituality also be Trinitarian based?
2. How is Jesus’ new commandment to “love one another as I loved you” related to the Eucharist?
3. Do you think that if you are always very good and, in fact, become sinless, that this must guarantee your salvation?

New Testament Spirituality—Our Own Spirituality

Two Absolutely Key Factors

1. It must be Christ-centred
2. We must recognise our nothingness before God.

1. A Christ-Centred Spirituality



Although there is an essential continuity between the different spiritualities of the Old and New Testaments, there is also a fundamental difference - Jesus himself, as God, came to fulfil and perfect the spirituality of the Old Testament (Mtt.5:17).

In fact, because Jesus is God through the mystery of the Incarnation our spiritual life must be **centred on who he is and what he taught**. Yet, a Christ-centred spirituality is also a Trinitarian spirituality because it was the Father who sent the Son (Jn.3:16) before then sending the Holy Spirit through Jesus (Jn.15:26).

A Christ-centred spirituality must be based on the Gospels. However, even the Gospel writers emphasised different aspects of Jesus' message, as did St. Paul and the other writers of the New Testament, as we learnt in previous reflections. So what are the fundamental truths that must be absorbed into any spirituality?

Fundamental Truths for a Christ-Centred Spirituality

1. The mystery of the Incarnation is that God loved us so much he sent his Son to bring us into his divine life (Jn.3:16). This must be in the forefront of any spirituality. Now we know that our lives have **real meaning** because we can say and believe absolutely that **“God really loves me”**
2. Jesus as both God and Man means that humanity has the potential to share in his divine life. This incredible fact is taught us every time we receive the Eucharist worthily. We then come as close to God as we can in this our earthly existence.

So, the Eucharist is the most essential component in any meaningful New Testament spirituality.



3. Jesus perfected the meaning of love, first through the Parable of the Good Samaritan, (Lk. 10) where the meaning of ‘neighbour’ in the commandment to “Love thy neighbour as thyself” was extended beyond bonds of kinship and friendship to a universal level, then by his New Commandment to

“Love one another as I have loved you”.

This is impossible for us to achieve, of course, but is something that Jesus meant to be both a standard and an ongoing challenge. Therefore, New Testament spiritualities must not be solely prayer based, important though that is. They must be focussed on charitable actions “As long as we love one another God abides in us and his love **is perfected** in us” (1 Jn.4).



2. Our Nothingness Before God

This truth is probably be **the most difficult to accept** but is **absolutely crucial** for a deep and meaningful relationship with Our Lord Jesus. It formed the basis of Luther's ‘Justification by Faith’ because he realised that we can do absolutely nothing to justify our salvation. The opportunity for salvation **is a gift** to us, given by the actions of Jesus through his sacrificial death on the cross. Therefore, any spirituality, like that of the Pharisees, that thinks salvation could be **earned**, either by a strict adherence to the Law or forced on God by our good works, is both false and ineffective. Yet, if we are honest with ourselves, most of us have thought that way at some time or another, even if we do not any more. This was probably due to the way our Faith was taught us, but we must be careful not to revert to being Pharisees. Any

