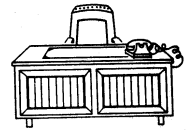


## 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 27, 2019



From the Desk of  
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

### Sunday Reflection:

You may have observed that the gospels for the last few Sundays have focused on prayer. In the gospel two Sundays ago, we read about prayer as thanksgiving/gratitude. Last Sunday's gospel highlighted the need for persistence in prayer. This Sunday's gospel addresses the importance of praying with humility.

Jesus addresses this Sunday's parable to those who are convinced of their own righteousness and despise everyone else. The parable reveals a remarkable difference in approach between two individuals at prayer - a Pharisee and a Tax Collector. First off, the Pharisee sits as close to the sanctuary as possible while the tax collector stands at a distance. This reveals their self-perception in relation to God and conforms to societal expectations.

Secondly, the style and content of each man's prayer were equally revealing. In his prayer, the Pharisee who perceived himself righteous was busy telling "himself" how good he was. The tax collector, on the other hand, conscious of himself as a sinner and ashamed to lift up his eyes to God, beat his chest and prayed for mercy and forgiveness. God forgives the tax collector and he goes home justified while the Pharisee was not. The message is clear, those who exalt themselves would be humbled while those who humble themselves would be exalted.

In light of this message, we may want to examine our attitude in relation to prayer. A few reflective questions will suffice. Do I find time to pray? How do I pray? Who best represents my prayer style - the Pharisee or the tax collector? What is my understanding of salvation? Do I see myself already saved through self-righteous practices or am I in need of salvation? Do I tend to look down on other people?

Of course, there is nothing wrong with acknowledging one's spiritual and moral progress, but it would be wrong to engage in self-justification before God. The Pharisee seemed to be doing the right things, but his arrogance got the better of him. It is wrong to look down on those whom we consider less gifted or less spiritual. People with deep spirituality are on the right path and deserve commendation. However, they need to avoid spiritual arrogance since the commendation that matters most comes from God. The attitude of this Pharisee shows why Jesus often referred to them as hypocrites. He is not a hypocrite in the sense of saying one thing and doing another. He is a hypocrite in the sense that the overwhelming objective of his pious practices was to impress people (himself) rather than God.

Those who are spiritually weak need our prayers and encouragement to deepen their faith rather than outright condemnation. Of course, there are those preoccupied with worldly affairs who find no time for God. Others are people who have been through tragedies and blame God for not intervening to prevent those things from happening. Some simply do not see the value in going to Mass regularly and complain about Mass being too long. They are quick to criticize church leaders and point out everything they think is wrong with the Church. They neither support their Church financially nor volunteer for anything.

The good news is that God does not turn his back on anyone nor does he give up on anyone. While sin remains a major obstacle in our relationship with God, everyone gets a second chance. The Tax collector in our gospel was ready to turn a new page. He humbled himself before God and asked for mercy and forgiveness. Likewise, when we find ourselves in similar situation, we need is to approach the throne of mercy with humility.

Have a great week!

*Fr. Romanus*