

We Need to Be Humble in our Dealing with God

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle C

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Luke 18: 9-14.

Jesus addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. "Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity -- greedy, dishonest, adulterous -- or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.' But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 18:9-14.

Introductory Prayer:

Lord, I believe in you with a faith that never seeks to test you. I trust in you, hoping to learn to accept and follow your will, even when it does not make sense to the way that I see things. I love you Lord. May my love for you and those around me be similar to the love you have shown to me.

Petition:

Lord, help me to have the humility of the tax collector.

1. The Pharisee Is Mistake-Prone

This Pharisee makes a lot of mistakes in the few moments he spends before God. First of all, he is laboring under the misapprehension that he can earn heaven. Another mistake is that he thinks that he can take credit for the good he does. Even though he begins by seeming to give God the credit, by the end of his prayer, he is acting as if he thinks he is the one who really deserves the praise. Does my prayer ever get derailed like this?

2. Hail, Full of Grace: Did Mary Have a Twin Brother?

Another mistake: he underestimates the evil that exists in his own life. He seems to be unaware of any sin he has committed – at least, he does not mention any sin to God in his little monologue. We know that Jesus says that even a just man sins seven times a day, so he must have something to put before the Lord and ask forgiveness. Maybe he has a conscience like a sieve – most of his sins get through it without the conscience picking them up. Unfortunately for him, he doesn't seem to be aware of anything. He only has a semi-conscience. Just because he doesn't mention it doesn't mean that God doesn't know what it is. If he asked for forgiveness, God would give it, but since he acts as if he were sinless, his sin remains.

3. Sorry Lord, I Blew It Yet Again

The attitude of the tax collector is completely different. Instead of focusing on his own goodness, he focuses on his own sinfulness. He asks God to forgive it, to overlook it; and this is the correct attitude to have before God. If God forgives our sins, then we have nothing to worry about. We may or may not have a history of good works we can point to in order to claim justification before God, but if we do not ask God for forgiveness for our failings, our good works are useless. Which is my attitude? Do I have a conscience like a sieve, that doesn't pick up my failings? Do I focus more on my good works or more on my failings? It is not necessarily a mark of pessimism to focus on where you have failed God (although you should not do that exclusively), but it is certainly foolish to ignore it.

Conversation with Christ:

Dear Jesus, help me to be aware of and truly sorry for my sins. If there is anything I am not aware of, help me to see what it is. If there is anything I underestimate, show its true evil to me. Help me to be mindful that good works are worthless without the right attitude of humbly seeking forgiveness.

Resolution:

I will do an examination of conscience based on my own self-righteousness. Do I tend to excuse myself too easily of my failings? Do I think myself better than others? Do I refuse responsibility for the problems in my life, always blaming them on the other person who is not as intelligent as I am, as good as I am, as perceptive as I am, etc?