

Read

Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

Psalm 34:2-3, 17-18,
19, 23

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

Luke 18:9-14

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 23, 2022



REFLECTION

Imagine the two characters from this week's parable at the doctor's office. The tax collector tells the doctor that he is sick and asks for the doctor's help, and the Pharisee spends his entire appointment talking about how healthy he is compared to everyone else he knows. Which of them is going to get the best medical care?

The tax collector in this week's Gospel is honest with himself and with God. He knows his sins and prays for God's mercy. In contrast, the Pharisee is preoccupied with his own virtue and with other people's sins. Jesus tells us that, in the end, only one of the two was right with God ("justified") when he went home. The Pharisee couldn't ask for healing, so he could not be healed.

ACTION

Sometimes we look down on others, like the Pharisee, because it is uncomfortable to think about the ways we fall short of our own ideals. Thinking about your own sins might make you feel ashamed and unworthiness of love and belonging.

Researcher Brené Brown says that what makes guilt different from shame is that shame turns inward in a self-destructive way, but guilt turns outward toward reconciliation. Like the tax collector, we can offer our guilt to God and trust in his mercy to justify us and help us grow to overcome our sins. Practice saying the tax collector's prayer this week. You can add it to a nightly examination of conscience, or you can pray it mentally whenever shame tempts you to put yourself or others down.

Watch Brené Brown's TED Talk, "Listening to Shame":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psN1DORYYVO>



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Who are the people you are tempted to look down on or despise because of their faults?
- ❖ Is it possible to think of yourself as "a good person" without dismissing others as "bad people"?



October 23, 2022

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #150C

Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

Psalms 34:2-3, 17-18, 19, 23

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

Luke 18:9-14

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Jesus' parables continue teaching us how to pray. Last week we learned to pray persistently. This week, it is not so much the words we say, but the state of our hearts as we pray. It comes down to our intentions. The Pharisee said all of the right things. He surpassed the minimum requirements of religious obligation. By all accounts, he seems like a holy man. But his problem was on the inside. He used his prayer as a weapon to belittle others. Instead of looking to God, he looked to himself. The tax collector on the other hand, shows us the correct interior disposition: a humble and contrite heart. Let us pray consistently and humbly before God.

Q FOCUS: Humbly approach God in prayer.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week the Church recognizes St. Anthony Mary Claret (October 24). St. Anthony Mary Claret was a great Spanish priest and preacher. He felt a particular call to found a religious congregation focused on mission and is the founder of the Claretians. Also this week, the church celebrates two of the twelve apostles, Sts. Simon and Jude. Not much is known about these two men, but we honor their place as some of the first followers of Christ. Simon was called "the Zealot." Jude, though a similar name to Judas Iscariot, was not the one who betrayed Jesus. Though not much is recorded about their lives in the Scripture, they were among Jesus' closest followers

and the Church's tradition praises them for spreading the Gospel after Christ's death and resurrection.

Church Teaching Connection

"If the pharisee asked for nothing because he already had everything, the tax collector can only beg for the mercy of God. And this is beautiful: to beg for the mercy of God! Presenting himself with 'empty hands,' with a bare heart and acknowledging himself to be a sinner, the tax collector shows us all the condition that is necessary in order to receive the Lord's forgiveness. In the end, he is the one, so despised, who becomes an icon of the true believer" (Pope Francis, General Audience, June 1, 2016).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 18:9-14

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

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."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

► You might have heard someone say something like "Thank goodness I'm not like 'those' people." Who are some of "those" people that others might look down upon?

For the pharisee in this story, "those" people were known sinners; people who everyone had contempt for. The pharisee prayed, listing the good practices that he does which everyone should do. He goes to the Temple, he gives money through tithing, and he fasts. The problem with the pharisee is not the pious actions he did, but how he thought of himself. He thought those things made him better than other people. He was holier than everyone else. He thought he wasn't a sinner. He used his holiness as a weapon to hurt others, instead of to help others. The truth is, he was lost.

► Have you ever used your holiness as a weapon or have you met a person who has used their holiness as a weapon against you?

► How did that feel?

As Jesus continues to teach us how to pray, it is not enough that we pray persistently and consistently. We must also pray honestly. What we say, perhaps, isn't as important as the state of our hearts as we pray. The truth is, all of us are on the journey toward

God, but none of us has arrived. We continue our pilgrimage to our heavenly home, and we stumble and fall along the way.

The tax collector, a person despised in his own community, has nothing to say. He leaves himself at the mercy of God. His prayer may be among the most heartfelt in Scripture: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." The tax collector knows that God has all of the power to save and heal. Before this God, none of us can stand. We all will bow before him.

When the pharisee stands with his head held high, the tax collector bows low. When the tax collector has come to the end of his rope, he reaches out with hands open, he has nothing left but a radical trust in a merciful God. His humble prayer is ours, too.

► Are you willing to make a humble prayer to God, asking for mercy? What are some ways we might adjust our attitude to reflect this proper posture in our prayers?

So many times in Scripture, God raises up the lowly. Each time God does this, it is because the people have humbled themselves. The best example of this is the Blessed Mother, Mary. She humbly received God's mercy and accepted God's will for her life, allowing him to work his grace through her.

When we pray with humble hearts, God will raise us up as well. When we stop making life about "us" and "them" and realize there is only "us," we are on our way to humble prayer. Let us all emulate the tax collector in our prayer. It's not about being "holier than thou" but being holy together. So together we pray, "O God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 46.

Our prayers and sacrifices are meant to make us holy, not better than others.

True prayer is humble.

Holiness isn't a competition; we can be holy together.

Act on the Word

Flattery Rap

For this activity, you will need paper and pens for brainstorming and instrumental beats and a way to play them.

Split the group into two equal teams. In the spirit and style of rap battles, participants will write two lyrics complimenting and praising a member of the opposite team. Participants will go lyric for lyric in “battle” style, dropping their compliments.

Begin by giving the participants ample time to get to know each other’s large and small virtues and successes in order to write their lyrics. You can provide guiding questions to help get the conversation going, such as the following:

- ✳ What is something that you are proud of?
- ✳ What goal have you accomplished?
- ✳ What character traits have you been praised for possessing?

Then give the teams time to write their lyrics. They can be short, especially since you will want to make sure everyone has a chance to be complimented. Each person on the team will write complimentary lyrics about a person on the opposite team.

With the beats playing in the background, one person from the first team will rap their lyrics, then one person from the second team will rap their lyrics, and so on, until everyone has had a chance to go and everyone has been complimented. This is definitely meant to be cheesy, so encourage the “crowd” (everyone not rapping at the moment) to react with cheers and participate.

Here are some examples of what the raps might sound like:

✳ “Hannah, you’re so thoughtful!” (Crowd: “How thoughtful?!”) “You look over your shoulder to see if you need to hold the door open for someone!” (Crowd cheers!)

Or they can rhyme:

✳ “You’re like vanilla ice cream, / That’s cold as ice. / Everyone agrees, / Devon, you’re so nice!” (Everyone cheers!)

Close the activity by thanking everyone for their participation and reminding them that humility isn’t about disrespecting ourselves, but rather being grounded in who we are as children of God. We recognize that we are created by God, but are sinners in need of mercy. Every single one of us.

Closing Prayer

*God of truth and mercy,
you always hear the prayers of the humble.
Teach us to trust completely in you
as the source of our gifts and strength
in our weakness.
Help us to accept ourselves and others
with patience and compassion.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday’s Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.