

# From the PASTOR'S DESK



## *Feeling Virtuous*

Isn't it strange how frustrating 'virtuous' people can often be? It's not their virtue that frustrates us, but rather their self-satisfaction at being virtuous, their feeling of superiority over the rest of mankind.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus addresses Himself to *those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else*. There doesn't seem much point in being virtuous and at the same time despising others. When we *feel* virtuous, we fail to notice our own shortcomings and sinfulness and neglect the need for God's forgiveness. We are so blinded, we fail to see the good in others.

The tax collector, on the other hand, simply turns to God for mercy and forgiveness and recognizes his own sinfulness.

There is a story about a catechist who was teaching primary students this parable of The Pharisee and the Tax Collector. Like all good teachers, she ended the class with a summary of the lesson. To her horror, she heard herself say *Now, boys and girls, aren't we happy that we are not like the Pharisee?*

Religious people can easily find themselves under the illusion that they are better than others.

We must be aware of too much self-satisfaction in our lives. We like to think of ourselves as righteous, but we want to remember last week's gospel which immediately precedes this one. It ends with the words *when the Son of Man comes will he find faith on earth*.

This is a serious question and needs to be addressed. It is not sufficient to *accommodate* God and show up for church, fulfilling the requirements, performing the rituals. We must also have the faith and simplicity of a child.

In this part of Luke's Gospel, we hear *whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it*. So, to be virtuous there are two essential elements child-like faith and child-like humility.

*Oh, God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity*. Let's hope that this is never a prayer we are called to say. But just in case we do, it's time to stop praying and start believing.

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