



October 26, 2025

## Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and those who are crushed in spirit God saves."*

Psalm 34:19



Dear Friends,

There are those who believe in the idea of meritocracy; the rewards of life—money power, jobs, university admissions etc.—should be distributed according to skill and effort. Though widely held this belief fails to take into consideration the random luck that determines success or failure in the world. Merit, in a large part, is the result of dumb luck. Talent and the ability to persevere depend a great deal on one's genetic gifts and upbringing.

This gets translated into a false religious teaching called the prosperity gospel. This claims that God rewards with health, wealth, and happiness those who have enough faith and give enough to the church. They call this "give to get." They believe that financial prosperity is a sign of God's will and blessings. This theology is materialistic and manipulative, suggesting to believers that their failures are due to a "lack of faith" rather than other factors. It has bilked many poor folks and enriched many televangelists. This is the opposite of what our scriptures proclaim today. Both Sirach and Psalm 34 proclaim that *"The Lord hears the cry of the poor."*

On October 9, 2025, Pope Leo XIV published a letter, *"Dilexi Te"* (I have loved you), a call for all Christians to love the poor. It focusses on Christ's love for the poor and calls the Church to renew its commitment to serve the poor. Pope Leo denounces the persistence of growing inequalities. He points out that although efforts have been made to irradicate poverty, these remain insufficient where new more subtle forms of exclusion continue to emerge, just as harmful.

The Pope calls us to a concrete commitment to the poor accompanied by a change in mentality that impacts the culture at large. Leo affirms that God's love is revealed in a special concern for the poor. This is revealed in Jesus' life of poverty and his solidarity with outcasts (think of the plight of the undocumented in our country). True faith is inseparable from mercy and justice, denouncing abuse, exploitation, and challenging unjust wealth.

In our passage from Luke, Jesus addresses a parable *"to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else."* Think meritocracy and the prosperity gospel. Both of these ideologies put the deified "me" at the center of the universe. The Pharisee cannot really see or hear God as his ego gets in the way. He is so busy comparing and judging. He is sure he is separate and superior. He follows all the rules. He is completely oblivious to anything beyond himself. He cannot even see the randomness in the universe that could have just as likely cast him as the "sinful tax collector."

The tax collector is well aware of his position in relation to others. The others are only too happy to remind him that he is despised and a sinner. His honest assessment of himself opens the door to God. And God who takes pity on the broken and lowly hears the man.

Recently, I listened to a conservative podcast, Joe Rogan. He complained that the way that ICE is handling our immigrants is not what he signed on for. ICE was to arrest criminals and not rip parents away from their children. People who have been here 30 years honestly working and paying taxes. He said we need a way to legalize the immigrants who have done nothing wrong. I could not agree more. *"God hears the cry of the oppressed."* (Sirach 35:13)

Peace,

*Fr Ron*

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