

## Thirtieth Sunday YC. 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2022. Tax Collector and the Pharisee

We live in a world guided by principles, and our success in life depends on our ability to understand the different principles in which we are directly involved.

The best principles for our general success in life are the ones we: First Set goals for ourselves, prioritize our goals, overcome fears in life and know that learning has no limit.

Last Sunday we saw in our gospel reading a widow who understands the principle of 'asking', which in her case was persistent; she was able to receive favor from that Judge who neither feared God nor respect any human being (Luke 18:1-2). Sirach in our first reading today, highlighted some principles when we come to ask God for a favor; in verses 16 and 17, he said, serve the Lord willingly, and the Lord will accept you; your prayer will attain skies. The prayer of a humble person goes past the clouds... The more we understand the principles of life, the better for us.

There is a need to ask ourselves if we know the principles of the Eucharist, which is the source and summit of our life and of the liturgy, which we participate in every Sunday. Is there fruit in the Eucharist? The answer counts on our ability to understand the principles and keep to them. Saint Paul in the second reading, understands the principles of worshipping God, and having done his best in the service of the Lord, he categorically said: I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. The crown of righteousness awaits me (2Tim.4:7-8).

You and I must insist on knowing the principles of our Christian journey, we should not be in the church for the fun of it or for formalities, so that at the end like saint Paul even if the world rejects us, the Lord will stand by us to strengthen us.

Today in the gospel we have been presented with two personalities the Pharisee and the Tax collector who displayed different methods of prayer. The Pharisee lost sight of the principles while the Tax collector was on the point of the principles of prayer. We must understand who the Pharisee was: a religious leader who thought he is so close to God, that's why he took his position close to the altar where everyone would see him in the Church since he wanted to make a show of himself, the focal point was no longer God but himself, he concentrates on himself, I am not like other people who do this and that, I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.

I commended the efforts of the Pharisee, for his ability to avoid the evil that other people were doing, and his commitment in his religious duties: *praying, fasting and paying of tithes*. But he used his mouth to disqualify himself, when he started mocking those who were weak, 'I am not like this tax collector'. If opportunity is given to the Pharisee to be a judge upon others, he will condemn everyone, because he showed no compassion on his approach. In his beatitude in Matthew gospel 5:7, Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." How could the Pharisee receive mercy since he wasn't merciful? Sometimes we behave like the Pharisee, we mock and discourage those who are weak in our community, we claim perfection because of our pride.

The tax collector, knowing that he was a great sinner and rejected by the community, he stood far away and would not even raise his face to heaven because of his unworthiness, what he could do at that time was to beat his breast, beating up of breast is the sign of remorseful and acknowledging one's sin as we often do at the penitential Act during mass. The Bible says the tax collector went home fulfill and justified. When we humble ourselves, God will exalt us, if we exalt ourselves, we would be humble by God.

The method of tax collector in approaching God should be emulated by all Christians; let us approach the Holy Eucharist with respect and humility, let us not be ashamed to tell God we are sinners. Though God is not pleased with our sins, but He didn't reject us as his children, he wants us to come to him, he is happy to welcome a sinner. How sincere are we in our relationship with God through the Eucharist we receive daily? It was **Steven Tyler** who said Humility is important because it keeps you fresh and new. St. Augustine said, "Do you want to rise? Begin by descending. If you want to build a tower, you need to begin with a foundation: you need to bend-low in order to start a foundation.

Saint Paul said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the worst." (1 Tim 1:15).

Today we celebrate mission Sunday, we are all encourage to support the course of mission in the world: remember Some give, by going; others go, by giving. Try to write your name alongside with the world missionaries. The theme of this year world mission Sunday is "You shall be my witnesses" Acts 1:8. Each baptized person is called to mission, in the church and by the mandate of the church: consequently, mission is carried out together, not individually, in communion with the ecclesial community, and not on one's own initiative.

Peace,

Fr. Jingbe Simon