

### 30th Sunday (C)

In our Gospel our Lord gives us the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. The Pharisee shows us what not to do, while the Tax Collector is lifted up as one to imitate.

The prayer of the Pharisee is simply external. He's looking at his moral actions and his other observances of what is asked of everyone and in his mind is faithful to these so he's good right? He also compared himself to the Tax Collector thinking him superior. Tax collectors were seen as collaborators to the foreign Roman government, and also viewed as immoral. He made this prayer but wasn't truly giving his heart to God, and so wasn't allowing himself to become transformed.

True prayer is humble, vulnerable, and trusting. Overtime we should notice a change within ourselves if we are really praying. We're allowing ourselves to be led by Christ to go where He wants to bring us, we're allowing ourselves to become transformed, and we welcome crosses and sufferings when they come. These marks of an authentic prayer life.

And so this Tax Collector is lifted up in this parable for us to imitate. He shows us vulnerable, interior prayer. He shows us humility in prayer, as he was beating his chest begging God for mercy. [We imitate this at Mass when we pray the *Confiteor*... I have greatly sinned through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.] I think we're led to infer that the Tax Collector was

slowly transformed by God's mercy, whereas the Pharisee stayed where he was and didn't advance in the spiritual life.

God's mercy can overcome anything and everything. We should never think that God's grace and mercy can't change us anymore. That we're just stuck where we're at. We should never become comfortable or complacent with these thoughts. These things limit God's grace and mercy and will, so they are an offense to Him I think. He can't accomplish the good work He wants to do in us because we won't let Him.

There's a spiritual axiom which says if we're not advancing in the spiritual life then we're digressing. The spiritual life is like climbing a mountain. We're either going up or going down. There's no plateau. Plateaus are illusions in the spiritual life. So the acknowledgment that we're sinners in need of God's mercy is the beginning of engaging ourselves in the spiritual life.

With All Saints' Day coming up this Saturday, there are plenty of examples of saints who were completely transformed by God's mercy. All the saints were, but some were more dramatic sinners than others. King David was an adulterer and a murderer. St. Paul killed Christians. St. Olga of Kiev committed a genocide in retribution for the murder of her husband. Ven. Matt Talbot lived in Ireland and was an alcoholic. Servant of God Jacques Fesch was a wealthy French atheist. He married his girlfriend after she became pregnant. Left her for another woman and got her pregnant. He left her wanting to escape from everything by buying a boat.

His dad wouldn't give him any money, so he robbed a man. He murdered a cop as they pursued him. Was on death row for three years where his heart was completely changed by God's mercy, weeping over his sins and wanted forgiveness from his wife.

Lastly we have St. Bartolo Longo. He was canonized just last Sunday. He was a satanic priest. About as opposite as you can get from a saint. He was converted particularly through Our Lady and the Rosary. Every mother will do anything and everything for their children. Our Blessed Mother will move heaven and earth to help save our soul through the mercy of her son.

What are we waiting for? What is holding us back? A good question for all of us to ask ourselves, including myself. For God's mercy to transform us we first have to receive it. We first have to want His help. We need His mercy in Confession. We need regular reception of the Eucharist in Holy Communion. We need to pray, and the Rosary is very powerful. Our Lady and the Rosary converted a satanic priest.

God's grace can work wonders. All we have to do is give Him permission to act inside of us, and we can all become the saints He created us to be.