

## Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time – 10-26-2025

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.”

Jesus made it very clear that the Pharisee in the gospel today was a man of the law. On the surface he was following the commandments of Law and fulfilling his obligation toward God.

However, Jesus also made it quite clear that the Pharisee was actually worshipping himself and ultimately praying to himself.

Listen one more time. “The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself...” Look how great I am compared to everyone else.

God wasn’t listening to him at all. All of the sins that he avoided and all of the good deeds he had performed didn’t amount to anything in the eyes of God and certainly weren’t going to compel God to step up and take notice.

Living a good life on the surface is not sufficient to keep anyone out of hell.

As Catholics we all pretty much know what we should do and what we should avoid. But how is a Catholic doing something good any different than an atheist doing the same thing?

What should be the difference between a Catholic versus an atheist giving someone, let's say, a glass of water because they are dying of thirst? It should be infinite.

If we give someone a cup of water only because they are thirsty then both parties feel good. One feels good because he did something nice and the other feels good because his thirst was quenched. However, that feeling would die when they die because it's just a natural act.

But if it is done humbly in union with Jesus Christ, in other words, as Jesus giving water to Jesus, then the very same simple act becomes a supernatural one and a participation in Jesus Christ's salvation and sanctification of the world.

Now let's take a look at the tax collector. Jesus didn't give us much information about him. He stood off at a distance and wouldn't even raise his eyes to heaven. He beat his breast and prayed, O God, be merciful to me a sinner. On a side note, for those who went on the bus trip this prayer might sound familiar.

Anyway, Jesus informs us the tax collector went home justified not the Pharisee; for whoever exalts himself will be humbled and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

We should all familiarize ourselves with this prayer; O God, be merciful to me a sinner because it is a prayer that pierces the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

But now back to the Pharisee again. Pharisees always get a bad rap. However, we can be sure that many of them came to Christ, embraced the Catholic way and learned the tax collectors prayer.

I say this because Saint Paul himself was a Pharisee and one of the most zealous of his time. He persecuted the early Church and even presided over the murder of Saint Stephen the first martyr.

But Saint Paul was knocked off his feet and blinded by the Lord on the road to Damascus. The Lord humbled him and Saint Paul responded by becoming the apostle to the gentiles...and he suffered much for the sake of the kingdom.

At the end of the day, when it mattered most, Saint Paul could say, "I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for Christ."

This wasn't presumption or a lack of humility on Saint Paul's part. His was a radical confidence that we all must have that the Lord will rescue us from every evil threat and bring us safely to his heavenly kingdom provided we humble ourselves, recognize our sinfulness and strive to do everything for his sake alone.

I'm sure Saint Paul humbly prayed the tax collectors prayer many times over during his life.

So let's make this prayer our own as well. O God, be merciful to me a sinner and strive to do everything for the glory of God alone even if it's only giving someone a cup of water.