

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

Pastor – Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Victoria, BC, Canada

In the Gospel passage today, we have to ask ourselves: was the Pharisee praying? I would say, from what the Pharisee prayed aloud, that he was not praying, but he was judging. He was there, deliberately highly visible in the temple, with a certain attitude as if to say 'I am better than others.' He was judging everyone in that temple, looking around at others and condemning them as he praised himself: “Ahaaa haa.... I am better than anyone!” Whatever he exhorted aloud in prayer was not from his heart because his heart was full of resentment, arrogance, dislike, anger, pride, and self-glorification.

Prayer should bring with it a closeness to God, and to our brothers and sisters. That is not what we see happening through the Pharisee’s prayer; ending up merely as just words uttered by his lips. In contrast, we see a real understanding of prayer being demonstrated by the Tax Collector who was expressing his brokenness, and a feeling in his heart stemming from the lost opportunities for loving God and his brothers and sisters. He cried out: “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” a prayer uttered from the innermost depths of his soul. Even though he was standing far off at the back of the temple and ashamed to look up to heaven, his heart was still with God and His Divine Mercy.

In the Book of 2nd Chronicles 7:14, it states: “... if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” This is reflected through the prayer of the Tax Collector who accepted his weakness, making him humble in prayer, and God heard and accepted his prayers. The Pharisee’s prayer, however, boasted of his own greatness, and of his diligence in observing his religious practices and duties.



So, when we pray:

- Let us be humble.
- Let us be without judgment. If we feel that others are not living their lives as God wishes, we should pray for them.
- Let us focus on forging a personal relationship with God.
- Let prayer come from our hearts, and not just words simply from our lips.
- Let us trust in the mercy and love of God.
- Let us not look down upon our brothers and sisters.
- Above all, let us feel and place ourselves in the midst and presence of God.