



30th Sunday of Ordinary time
Gospel of Luke 18:9-14
Reflection – Asia

The Pharisee and the Tax collector

Today's Gospel presents to us two individuals before God in prayer; the Pharisee and the Tax collector. The Pharisee uttered *"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."* While the Tax collector *stood off a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast and prayed, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner."*

The Pharisee thinks he is praying to God as he compares himself to the rest and brags all that he does. He put himself on the highlight; of his intelligence, status and piety. Seemingly not needing God because he is good enough; he does everything right by himself. He failed to recognize that he was actually boasting before God. His focus became his very self and no longer God in prayer. He became haughty. And pride blind him to see his true self. On the contrary, the Tax collector doesn't even have the courage to raise his eyes to heaven; ashamed of his sinfulness, nothingness and an unworthiness before God. He beat his breast and prayed, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." He sees light, that brought him to acknowledge his flaws and imperfections. He recognized his need for God's mercy and forgiveness; relying on God's goodness, that he too may be good.

These two characters in today's parable depict of who and what we are before God. It reminds us to look at ourselves intently and with humility, examine how we approach and relate to God in prayer. Are we, like the Pharisee who sees nothing but himself as all good and righteous? What blind us to acknowledge our flaws and imperfections? ... and with humility, accept that we are nothing before God. All what we have possessed and achieved are not from our own merit, rather it comes from God's generosity and goodness. So, what we could really be proud of? But often times, we fall in the temptation; to escalate ourselves and consider it higher than the others, the feeling of not needing God and others because we manage and we have what we need in life. Jesus reminds us "for whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted." May we allow the Word of God to pierce our being; and so, humble ourselves before Him and acknowledge Him as our God. A God of goodness and generosity.