

30 th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18
2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18
Luke 18:9-14

A. Text/Context

- The gospel today tells us of our disposition in prayer or our attitude towards prayer
- At this moment Jesus is surrounded by people who are convinced of their own righteousness
- These are the people who think that they are always correct and worse because they are correct they also despise others, they discriminate others because they are sinners
- And so Jesus tells these people the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector
- During the time of Jesus, the Pharisees are the educated, the knowledgeable people that is why they know very much the law in fact they are the interpreters of the law and they are learned and intelligent so they know how to argue
- The tax collectors serve the Roman government even if they are Jews where there is business there is always a tax collection
- There is a specific value of tax for all kinds of goods. In excess of the collection, it goes to their pockets and so they charge more and only the right amount is remitted to the government
- So, the tax collectors really have a very notorious reputation of dishonesty and corruption because everybody knows that they are defrauding the people
- Today in the gospel, this is happening, the Pharisees believed that they are correct and so Jesus told them about the parable
- With the Pharisee going to the temple to pray, here is his prayer: O God...
- Now the tax collector also went to the temple to pray and look at his prayer: O God

be merciful to me a sinner, fully recognizing his nothingness before God

B. Human Situation

- What is now the difference between the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector?
- The Pharisee is giving thanks before God all the good things that he is doing. There is no problem with giving thanks to God
- The problem with the prayer of the Pharisee is that he despises the tax collector
- So that the Pharisee is no longer praying but he is now boasting before God
- In other words, the prayer of the Pharisee reeks with so much pride and self-righteousness which render it null and void to obtain mercy from God
- On the other hand, the tax collector prayed at a distance from the altar and said: O God, be merciful to me a sinner
- This is an act of humility. At the end of the gospel Jesus said that the tax collector went home justified because he humbled himself before God
- Here we now see, what must be our attitude towards prayer or how should we be disposed towards prayer
- What is now the requirement when we pray? We need to be humble and lowly in order to obtain mercy. We strip ourselves with pride as we kneel in front of God. We must always remember that God exalts the lowly and the humble of heart
- This is what is stated in the Magnificat of Mary: God sets down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up the lowly
- The Pharisee in the gospel enumerated to God all the good things he did. So what will be its consequence?
- It will appear that the Pharisee no longer needs God because he is already very sufficient and therefore, he is not praying because he is boasting

C. Challenge

- Dear people of God, all of us are sinners and nobody is exempted from that
- I read an article that even the most holy person on the face of this planet commits sin 7 times a day
- That is already the most holy person, then what about us, me, you, the neighbors and the entire humanity. We are all sinners
- The good things that we do, the achievements that we have, cannot justify that we are better than the rest
- The truth about prayer is that even if we are already a good Christian yet we are so proud before God about it, then he will not have mercy on us
- God is not pleased with the proud and self-righteous people
- On one hand, if we are also sinners, we know that we do all the bad things, yet we are also very proud about the sins we do, the more, that God will have no mercy on us
- On the other hand, that we wanted to be so holy that we can no longer accept our own sinfulness will not be good for our spiritual life because we can never be perfect
- We only strive to be perfect but as human beings we already have weaknesses and shortcomings that we need to accept
- If perfection becomes an obsession we can develop a scrupulous conscience
- That you are always tortured even of the smallest sins that you commit that you want to go to confession everyday
- It is not a good spiritual health. Why? Pride is already there because you cannot accept your sinfulness
- There is no room before God for the proud and the self-righteous, they will obtain no mercy from God
- This is the challenge of today's gospel. We are reminded that the prayers of the humble and the lowly are so powerful in begging for

God's mercy according to the 1st reading in the book of Sirach

- We are also reminded that the prayers of the innocents especially the children are very powerful especially in our most difficult moments as exemplified by St. Paul in the 2nd reading who was imprisoned even if he is innocent
- That is why parents should tell their children to pray especially in moments of crisis because their prayers are powerful by virtue of their innocence because they are spared from the sin of pride and self-righteousness because they do not know about these things
- The prayers of the lowly and the innocent are so pleasing before God
- And so the next time we pray, we dispose ourselves to be humble and lowly and for sure God will have mercy on us and he will listen to our supplications