

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke 18:9-14

‘The tax collector went down to his house justified, rather than the Pharisee.’

At that time: Jesus told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ‘Two men went up into the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: “God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.” But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.’

Reflection

Jesus tells this parable to warn those who trust in their own goodness and look down on others. The Pharisee lists all the religious things he does, but he’s focused on proving he’s better than everyone else. The tax collector, knowing his failings, can only pray: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” And Jesus says it is this humble man who goes home forgiven.

St Vincent de Paul often reminded his followers that true holiness begins with humility. He said, “Humility is nothing but truth, and pride is nothing but lying”. Vincent knew that when we forget our need for God’s mercy, we risk becoming proud and judging others.

Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, founder of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, urged young people to “go to the poor” and learn from them. He believed that serving others should be rooted in love, not in seeking praise or feeling superior.

This parable challenges us as young Vincentians. When we pray, God doesn’t ask for perfect words or impressive achievements. He wants honesty. And when we serve, we are not “above” anyone. We are all God’s children, walking alongside one another.



Materials needed

Pens and paper

Activity

Invite everyone to write a private prayer beginning with:

- “God, here I am...”

Encourage them to be completely honest, they can tell God what they’re proud of, what they’re struggling with, or where they need his mercy.

Remind them this prayer is for God’s eyes only; no one will read it aloud. Offer the chance (not obligation) to share just one word from their prayer that sums up how they feel (for example: “tired,” “hopeful,” “forgiven”).

Call to Action

This week, take a few moments each day to be honest with God about how you really feel – not what you think you should feel. Look for one small way to show humility and kindness to someone around you, especially someone you might usually overlook or judge. Let God’s mercy flow through you in your words or actions.

