

Pray in Humility!

“If you have lost the taste for prayer, you will regain the desire for it by returning humbly to its practice” (St. Pope Paul VI).

The Eucharistic celebration (Mass) is the sacrament of God’s mercy. At different times within the Mass, we ask for God’s forgiveness because we believe, as we profess in the creed, “the forgiveness of sin” and affirm our human frailty and the reality of sin. Last Sunday, we read the first part of Luke’s Gospel chapter 18 on the parable of the persistent widow and wicked judge, through which we were called to reflect on the importance of praying with perseverance and persistence. The second part of Luke’s Gospel chapter invites us to reflect on our attitude in prayer through the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.

Jesus, through today’s Gospel of Luke (18:9-14), teaches us how we should pray and how not to pray: Avoiding self-justification and judging others in prayer. Today’s first reading, the book of Sirach (35:12-14; 16-18), one of the wisdom books, reminds us of the importance of praying in humility, “...the prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds; it does not rest till it reaches its goal, nor will it withdraw till the Most High responds...” In addition, in today’s second reading (2 Timothy 4:6-8,16-18), St. Paul, in the last part of his letter to Timothy in a prayerful way, sets a good example for us. He offered a prayer of inclusiveness and forgiveness.

Praying in humility reminds us that our prayer should not be time for self-defense, self-justification, self-appraisal, or justification, but more of thanksgiving and asking for mercy. The significant problem with the prayer of the Pharisee in the Gospel was that he used his prayer time to judge and condemn the Republican, which is a mark of pride. From the Tax Collector in the Gospel, we learn the importance of praying in humility as a model of prayer. Praying in humility is also an act of faith. It calls to our mind that our prayer should reflect our total dependence on God and our openness to receive the mercy of God, which is infinite and definite. Let us always remember these words of Jesus that conclude today’s Gospel, ***“whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”*** Amen.