

October 23, 2022 - 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Gospel of Luke 18:9-14  
Fr. JB Okai

In contrasting the prayer of the Pharisee with that of the Tax Collector in today's Gospel reading, Christ offers the humility of the Tax Collector as a **model** to teach his disciples – and all of us **to love, pray, act, behave, judge, and forgive one another** in humility before God and neighbour.

What is "humility" in the context of today's Gospel reading? I understand "humility" as the **"FRAGRANCE" of the Creator that is reflected in people, parents, or leaders, who are genuinely humble.** The danger is if we are, or when we become full of ourselves, we give little room for the Creator's grace to work through, with, and in us.

Jeremiah 9:23-24, Psalm 34:2, and St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 and Galatians 6:14 implore us to "boast in the Lord alone." St. Paul continues in 2 Corinthians 12:11 that instead of "boasting," he would rather become a **"fool"** for the Lord. Following in the footsteps of St. Paul, have we, as Christians, Pope, Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, priests, and parishioners made ourselves **"fools"** for the Lord to make the world a better place for all to live?

In Luke 18:13, the Tax Collector cried out, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner?" What was the meaning of his cry? It was a child's humble cry to attract God's attention, compassion, forgiveness, healing, and restoration of having lost his self-worth. In all honesty, can we, who identify ourselves as Christians, Pope, Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, priests, and parishioners have the compassion to forgive, to heal, and to reinstate the self-worth of the "sinner" who sins against us just as we cry for mercy? "God, be merciful to me a sinner?" (**Sing: "Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned"**). In Hebrews 4:13, the author reminds us once again that, **"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight."**

What should baffle our mind's imagination is if we are constantly pleading for the Creator's mercy upon us, "how is it that are we so quick to point fingers at the faults of others, condemn or punish others for their "sins" but forget our sinfulness yet unknown to the world? In a conscious self-examination of consciousness, we are hereby reminded that **when our sins are laid bare in public, we cease to be "saints" after all.** And we are humbled just as when the Tax Collector found himself humbled before the Lord, cried from the depth of his heart saying, "Be merciful on me, O God." (**Sing: "Humble thyself in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up, higher and higher and He shall lift you up!"**).

We can claim to be merciful a million times over but if our reaction, attitude, or behaviour towards the "sinner" is neither modelled after the Lord's compassion, empathy, understanding, and forgiveness towards healing and restoring the self-worth of the sinner, we fail **"to be as merciful as the Lord is merciful"** (cf. Lk. 6:36-38) and **"as perfect as our Creator is perfect"** (cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48; James 1:4).

In my ministry as Chaplain celebrating the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to the sick and dying in hospitals, Hospices, Care homes and Long-term facilities or hearing Private Confessions, I read from Luke: 11:28-29 to remind the sick and the dying or the penitent "to turn their souls to find refreshment and rest in the Creator" because the Creator alone is the true and honest merciful judge.

As partakers of this Eucharist, let us not only write about "mercy" but possess the self-control to demonstrate tangibly that we are as merciful as the Lord is merciful.

I wish us all a fabulous and peaceful week. Amen!!!