Fr. Rudy's Reflections
The Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 26, 2025

The Posture that Justifies

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

In a world of social media and highlight reels, we're conditioned to showcase the best version of ourselves. We are curated, polished, and praiseworthy. But what happens when this need for external validation seeps into our spiritual lives? Do we approach God with the same filtered face, listing our good deeds while silently comparing ourselves to others?

In the Gospel for the Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Luke 18: 9-14), Jesus tells a striking parable that cuts through this tendency: the Pharisee and the tax collector. On the surface, the Pharisee appears righteous. He fasts, he tithes, and he prays—all actions that align with religious devotion. But the spirit of his prayer betrays something else: pride. "God, I thank you that I am not like other people," he says, turning his prayer into a self-congratulatory monologue.

The tax collector, by contrast, stands far off, unable to lift his eyes to heaven. His words are few but weighty: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." No comparison, no justification, no list of accomplishments. Just raw, honest humility.

Jesus doesn't leave room for misinterpretation. He states clearly that it is the tax collector, not the Pharisee, who ultimately goes home justified before God. The reason? A humble heart is open to grace, while a prideful one is closed off from it.

St. John Vianney once said, "Without humility, that lovely and rare virtue, you will be as unlikely to reach heaven as without Baptism." Humility is the doorway to God's mercy because it allows us to see ourselves truthfully—as sinners in need of forgiveness, not saints in need of applause.

Pope Francis echoed this in 2016: "It is not enough. . . to ask how much we pray, we have to ask ourselves how we pray. . . . Can one pray with arrogance? No. Can one pray with hypocrisy? No. We must only pray by placing ourselves before God just as we are. . . ."

This parable reminds us that true spirituality is not about perfection but about posture, the posture of the heart. Theologian Peter Kreeft writes, "The greatest of all sins. . . is the refusal to repent." God's mercy is always available, but we must be willing to ask for it. The Pharisee, blinded by his own virtue, never thought he needed it. The tax collector, aware of his need, received it in abundance.

As we reflect on this Gospel, we might ask ourselves: When I stand before God in prayer, do I bring him my heart or just my résumé?

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy