

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year-C 2019

A Message from Fr. Mark

In today's Gospel Jesus tells the parable of the two men praying in the temple: one a repentant tax collector and the other a self-righteous Pharisee whose prayer seems more like bragging that he is better than others: "*I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.*" (Luke 18:12)

The point of the parable is that we must always be humble that it is not enough just to do certain external practices and give a certain amount. God wants our hearts.

There is a danger for those who do a lot of praying and fasting but whose hearts are not converted. They can become proud. St. Maximilian Kolbe once taught that there are three important means to becoming a saint: 1) prayer, 2) fasting or voluntary penance and 3) enduring sickness. He then said that of these three, the best of them all is the third one: being sick. He explained that with the first two there is a danger of pride. Those who become experts in prayer can sometimes become proud, thinking that they are better than others. Those who become accustomed to doing bodily penance can also become proud, thinking that they are stronger than others. Pride can creep in because they start to think that they are better than others at enduring pain. The third is the best because there is no danger of pride. No one proud of being sick. Those who are sick must humbly acknowledge their weakness and rely on others. It is the easiest way to become a saint because the person must rely completely on God. It is difficult, but we must try to see sickness as a blessing.

Some people might use this as an excuse to neglect their time of prayer and forgo fasting. They say that they do not want to appear holier than others. But this is a false humility. We must continue to do acts of prayer and penance, as Jesus recommended (Matthew 17:21). We must do this despite the fact that people might accuse us of trying to be "holier than thou." We must remember the beautiful poem which was a favorite of Saint Teresa of Calcutta:

"...If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway...

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway...

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway."