

30th Sunday C



O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

THE GOSPEL Luke 18:9-14

Listen, to one man,
who moves from storage bin to apartment.
With no bed and sleeps on the floor.
“What else could I want?”
he prays.
“God is so merciful.”

And to another.
With no ID, he can't get in a shelter,
... has disease-ravaged toes.
He finds shoes that fit,
and cries to God,
“Oh, I am so blessed.”

Lord,

Have mercy on us.

THE FIRST READING Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

*Though not unduly partial toward the weak,
yet he hears the cry of the oppressed.*

I will bless the Lord at all times.
Praise ever in my mouth.
Let my soul glory
in the Lord,
who will
hear
the cry
of the poor.

Let the lowly hear and be glad:
the Lord listens to
their pleas,
and to hearts broken,
God is near, who will hear the
cry of the poor.

We proclaim your greatness, O God,
with praise ever in our mouth.
Every face brightened
in your light, for
you hear
the cry
of the poor.*

*Prayer for the First Reading taken from The Cry of the Poor**
John Foley, SJ

THE SECOND READING 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

May it not be held against them!



Paul was deserted,
poured out like a libation,
because he loved
you, Jesus.

He
started to
sound like you
and, like you, put
his loving trust in God,
every minute of every day:
when he preached, or when he
struggled with a “thorn in his side.”

Lord, let us love
your Abba well, like Paul.
let us start to look and sound
like you. *(Annie Osdieck)*

Reflections:



The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in today's gospel is addressed to "those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else." The parable's message goes further than to simply encourage generic humility. Jesus targets the disdain for others at the core of this particular type of spiritual pride.

The tax collector's humility allows him to present himself before the Lord with an honesty that the Pharisee, for all his merits, cannot. Furthermore, the sinful tax collector asking for the mercy of God is not led to despise the Pharisee in the way the Pharisee and Jesus' intended audience despise everyone else.

There is a sense in which the objective and concrete goodness of the Pharisee has become an obstacle that leads him into self-deception and hatred of the world and others. In the same way, there is a sense in which the real sins of the tax collector awaken his conscience with enough self-knowledge to repent and seek mercy. Perhaps the lesson here is that a goodness that leads to moral slumber can bear evil fruits just as the sin that awakens our conscience can bear the good fruit of humility and mercy.

In the second reading, we hear Paul writing to Timothy. Paul was a Pharisee. And his words share some of the characteristics of the Pharisee of our gospel's parable. But there is a crucial difference: there is no disdain nor hatred. Paul's vision of justification is for all. "The Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me," Paul insists, "but to all who have longed for his appearance." Paul wishes no evil even to those who deserted and harmed him, exclaiming, "May it not be held against them!" In many ways, Paul appears as someone who has absorbed the message of our gospel's parable.

The first reading from the Old Testament offers a more poetic and mystical account of what we heard from the New. "The prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds." Here, the cry of the oppressed carries an insistence that is different from the Pharisee, the tax collector, and even Paul. Unlike these men, the widow and the orphan summon a demand and priority that God more than justifies. Here, mercy abounds and salvation feels qualitatively different. It is immediate. God not only hears the cry of the poor; in Christ, God also speaks from the very same poverty. (Taken from U.S.Catholic October 2022)

