



Bringing Home the Word

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
October 26, 2025

Righteous or Self-Righteous?

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

"O God, I thank you that I am not like...this tax collector." The words of the Pharisee in today's gospel might look like a prayer of thanksgiving. However, it is not prayer, nor does it express gratitude. It is an arrogant statement of self-congratulation. One might think that he had a right to boast. After all, he did observe certain religious obligations and refrain from forms of public immorality. Why did Jesus say that he was not justified?

First, he haughtily presented himself in the Temple as a prayerful man. As we

saw last week, the fundamental character of prayer is acknowledgment of human neediness and a trust in God's loving care. This man did not see himself as needy or requiring God's care. Second, he did not realize that as important as religious observance and good works might be, they are not requirements fulfilled to earn God's love. Rather, they should flow from one's inner relationship with God. Third, he judged the inner disposition of others by observing the outer circumstances of their lives.

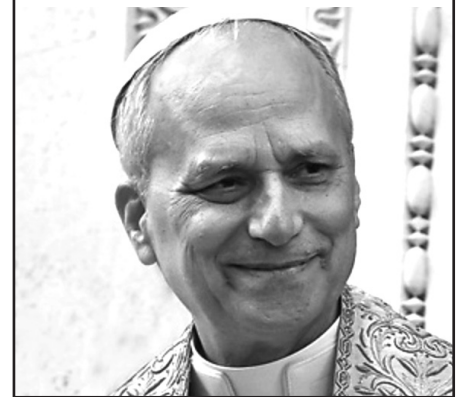
On the other hand, Jesus praised the tax collector. Why? First, he acknowledged he was a sinner in need of God's mercy. After all, as tax collector, he worked for the hated Romans who occupied the land. Most likely, he made his own living by adding a commission to the taxes he collected from others. Second, he made no claim of being righteous and deserving God's mercy. Third, overwhelmed by his own unworthiness, he compared himself to no one. His was genuine prayer. †

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A Word from Pope Leo XIV

My own story is that of a citizen, the descendant of immigrants, who in turn chose to emigrate. [We] can find ourselves healthy or sick, employed or unemployed, living in our native land or in a foreign country, yet our dignity always remains unchanged: it is the dignity of a creature willed and loved by God.

AUDIENCE OF THE HOLY FATHER,
ROME, MAY 16, 2025



Sunday Readings

Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

Give to the Most High as he has given to you, generously, according to your means.

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

[Paul said,] "I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith."

Luke 18:9-14

[The Lord said,] "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I more like the self-righteous Pharisee or the humble tax collector?
- Do I think of myself as superior? To whom? Why?



True and False Humility

Christopher M. Bellitto, PhD

Saint Teresa of Ávila considered humility a potentially dangerous and suspect virtue that, in the wrong hands and circumstances, could end up enslaving, not liberating, a person. She was not going to let that happen to her or her nuns. Teresa's skepticism about humility challenged the monastic notion of humility as quiet obedience and ennobling suffering. Dispatched wrongly, Teresa said, humility could lead to letting yourself be walked over. That's why self-knowledge is so critical to Teresa: it helps a person find the proper range of humility as it sits

appropriately between hubris and humiliation. Both poles were a temptation for Teresa, especially because she was peppered with criticism from male civil and religious authority figures, including those in the Office of the Inquisition, for her powerful influence and mystical visions.

The humility that comes from self-knowledge is an attitude that makes you realize who and what you are and aren't, but it also compels you to find out more by dispelling fear and powering insight.

You know that you're not an expert in everything and you can't control every circumstance, but you're also confident in what you do know and what you should do. In this sense, Teresa's concept of humility cultivates bravery and persistence.

Teresa warns that enemies can employ humility to make you feel small and isolated or to demean your abilities. That's false humility, and it leads to self-delusion, which produces inner turmoil. It's not healthy self-knowledge; you will recognize authentic self-knowledge, because it provides a sense of peace. In Teresa's own life, knowing who she was and wasn't allowed her to push back against her opponents, who saw her reform efforts and visions as disruptive, especially for a woman. It takes guts to tell people to slow down, to think, and to stop trying to control everything and everyone. Because of a proper sense of humility and its role in her life and leadership, Teresa had guts. †

Authentic self-knowledge provides a sense of peace.

From "Saints Hildegard and Teresa: Exemplars of True Humility" by Christopher M. Bellitto, PhD, *Liguorian*, January/February 2025.

Wisdom from Catholic Update

From "What Do Catholics Believe: A Hierarchy of Beliefs and Practices" by Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSsR

A common misconception among Catholics is that everything the Church teaches is of equal importance. Some Catholics believe that all teachings are "the infallible teaching of the pope," or that each of the disciplines, practices, dogmas, and doctrines of the Church are all directly "revealed." It's not surprising that there is often confusion. "In Catholic doctrine there exists an order or 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 90). If we understand the teachings of the Church within the context of this hierarchy, it may be easier to focus on what is essential truth without feeling like a bad Catholic and without condemning others.

Catholic Update—a subscription newsletter published eleven times a year—explores Church tradition and teaching on contemporary topics. Liguori.org • 800-325-9521



Forgiving God, when we are tempted to imagine ourselves superior to others, please gently correct us and help us see others as you see them. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

October 27—
November 1

Monday, Weekday:

Rom 8:12–17 / Lk 13:10–17

Tuesday, Sts. Simon and Jude:

Eph 2:19–22 / Lk 6:12–16

Wednesday, Weekday:

Rom 8:26–30 / Lk 13:22–30

Thursday, Weekday:


Rom 8:31b–39 / Lk 13:31–35

Friday, Weekday:

Rom 9:1–5 / Lk 14:1–6

Saturday, All Saints: Rv 7:2–4, 9–14 /

1 Jn 3:1–3 / Mt 5:1–12a

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