

**If you are humble, nothing will touch
you, neither praise nor disgrace,
because you know what you are.**

- Mother Teresa -



Sunday Reflection with Fr. Rafal



Dear Brothers and Sisters of St. Joseph Parish,

A humble heart is truly beautiful in the eyes of God. This is what we must always remind ourselves of every time we come to Mass. We need to humble ourselves for we come before the presence of God. In fact, the entire sacred celebration of the Mass is suffused with the spirit of humility. It starts with the Penitential Rite. The priest invites us to have the right disposition: "Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries." The readings usually remind us of God's mighty deeds and of man's helplessness and sinfulness. These are calls to repentance and conversion. In the Prayers of the Faithful we express all our needs, humbly acknowledging and imploring God's merciful providence. And just before receiving Holy Communion we say, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed."

In the Gospel this Sunday, Jesus gives us a lesson on the need to have a humble disposition especially when we worship God. He uses the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector as a warning so that we may avoid the trap of proud people "who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else."

The Pharisee in the Gospel was a good and highly respected man. He was a very devout believer who committed himself to a life of regular prayer and observance of God's laws. But when he prayed in the Temple, he did not enjoy the favor of God. The fatal mistake of the prayer of the Pharisee is his lack of humility. He did not pray, actually. He just boasted before God of his many accomplishments and of how good he was. He even judged and condemned others. Although he was a very good man, he was far from God. The Tax Collector, on the other hand, was a public sinner. He was the most hated man in the community for being a traitor to the Jewish people and dishonest in his conduct. But his prayer was more pleasing to God. He had the right disposition before God. He acknowledged the truth – that he was a great sinner – and so he dared not approach the altar. From a distance, he just bowed his head and said: "O, God, be merciful to me, a sinner." He trusted not in himself or in anything he had done but only in God's mercy. In his humility, he came to know the truth that God is full of mercy and love.

The way to true holiness is humility. It is the most basic foundation of all Christian virtues. It is impossible to be holy without humility. All the saints, without exception, were profoundly humble persons. As one comes closer to God, the True Light, the more clearly he sees his own unworthiness and sinfulness. The prayer of the Tax Collector is the same prayer that the saints utter over and over again: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." That is why the saints, despite their avowed holiness of life, make it a point to come to the sacrament of Confession almost every day.

As we come again before God's presence, let us bow our heads in humble acknowledgement of our unworthiness and sinfulness. May the Lord Jesus, who humbled Himself on the cross, fill us with the grace of humility so that we may become truly pleasing and beautiful in the eyes of God.

Have a Blessed Sunday!

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