From the Desk of Fr. Leo

Two Sundays ago, through the story of the ten lepers Jesus reminded us of the need to praise and thanks in our prayers. Last Sunday, in the parable about the widow, he indicated the necessity of praying always and not losing heart. This Sunday, he presents the foundation for all prayers, its starting point, which is humility.

Notice that the words of the Pharisee are not a prayer at all. They are an unabashed proclamation of his supposed virtues. The Pharisee uses God as a sounding board for his own praise as he takes all the glory and credit for himself. Since deep down, the Pharisee really feels no need for God, he does not ask God for anything. And as a result, he receives nothing from God except condemnation. In striking contrast, the tax collector can only recognize that before the all-holy God he is a sinner. His prayer is from the heart, a simple plea for mercy. Jesus attests that this prayer fulfills the words in the First Reading: "The prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds, it does not rest till it reaches its goal...." The Pharisee looked only at himself, but his eyes were blind to his self-righteousness. The tax collector looked toward God, and his eyes beheld God's goodness of which everyone is unworthy, including ourselves.

Before God we must be humble. There is no doubt that we should feel relaxed and comfortable with God when we come to pray. There is no reason to think of God as wrathful and forbidding. After all, God is our Father and we are his children. Since the church is the house of God, it is our home. But we can never forget that God is God. We are not and never will be his equal. We are invited into his home to eat of the Lord's Supper, but it is not the same as going to McDonald's for hamburgers. The church is a sacred place wherein we hear the holy word of God, and share in the sacrifice of his divine Son. No human being can be worthy of this privilege.

The liturgy attempts to put us in the right disposition for prayer at the beginning of Mass, by means of the Penitential Rite. The priest says: "To prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries let us acknowledge our sinfulness." Before God we are all sinners and are unworthy of him. At the beginning of Mass, we figuratively take off our shoes. We profess that we are God's servants. This act of humility is the necessary prerequisite for a pleasing prayer. As such, it is not depressing or self- defeating. Rather, since it is honest, it is healthy. Since it is truthful, it is pleasing to God and opens his ears and his heart to our prayers.

Remember that the Pharisee in the parable felt no need for God, and so asked for nothing. The tax collector knew that he needed God. Listen again to his prayer: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Doesn't that sound like the Penitential prayer the Church give us: "Lord, ave mercy"?

Fr. Leo Alban Asuncion

Mass Intentions for the Week

Tues.	**October 25**	**11:00AM**
Matt Airoldi†		Rita DeTomasi
Wed.	**October 26**	**11:00AM**
Manny Villaruel†		Gina Pena
Thur.	**October 27**	**11:00PM**
Vicky Rombawa (birthday)		Gina Pena
Fri.	**October 28**	**11:00AM**
Jessica Ouk (health)		Ma & Pa
Sat.	**October 29**	**4:30PM**
Arturo M. Balagot †		Arturo Balagot
Sun.	**October 30**	**9:00AM**
Christina Quiapo		Mom & Dad
Port Costa		**11:00AM**
People of the Parish		

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