

REFLECTION FOR THE 30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

(Luke 18:14)

The liturgy of this Sunday reminds us that God listens to the prayer of the humble. Only when we place ourselves before God with a poor and humble heart is our prayer true.

In the first reading, taken from the Book of Sirach, the author reminds us that God shows no partiality.

On the contrary,

“He will not show partiality against the poor,
he will listen to the prayer of the one who is wronged.
He will not ignore the supplication of the orphan,
or the widow when she pours out her complaint.

The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds,
and he will not be consoled until it reaches the Lord.”

In turn, in the second reading, Saint Paul speaks of himself as someone who is prepared to present himself before the Lord, because he knew how to follow His ways. He “fought the good fight, kept the faith.” Paul places all his trust in the Lord, “who will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.” Paul knows that all his life and mission were a grace of God, without any merit of his own. Therefore, with all humility and gratitude, he offers himself completely to the Lord. Along with Paul, let us also learn to recognize the gifts that God sows in our life, giving ourselves to Him with the confidence of children.

Today’s Gospel presents one of the most provocative and liberating parables that Jesus told: the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Two men go up to the temple to pray. One is a Pharisee, a religious man, an observer of the Law. The other is a tax collector, a public sinner in the eyes of the people.

At first glance, we might think that God would more gladly hear the Pharisee. After all, he fasts, pays the tithe, and keeps the commandments. But Jesus completely overturns our expectations: “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.”

Why?

Because God is not deceived by appearances. He looks at the heart.

The Pharisee goes up to the temple, but in truth he does not pray; he speaks with himself. His prayer is a monologue of self-satisfaction: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men..." He places himself at the center, uses God as a mirror to admire his own image.

The prayer of the Pharisee is made of self-satisfaction and pride. That of the tax collector: of truth and repentance.

The tax collector, on the contrary, stands at a distance, does not dare to lift his eyes, and only says: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

This is one of the most beautiful prayers in the Bible: simple, sincere, without masks. It is the cry of one who recognizes his own smallness and sinfulness before the greatness of God. And it is precisely this recognition that opens the heart to grace.

Humility is not a person despising himself, but placing himself in the truth: recognizing that all we are and have comes from God. The proud person closes in on himself; the humble opens himself to God. The parable reminds us that God does not love the perfect—He loves the true.

Holiness is not about never falling, but in knowing how to always rise again with humility.

Today Jesus also invites us to go up to the temple of our heart and to ask: how do I pray?

Is my prayer a list of merits or a dialogue of love?

Do I seek to appear good before others, or do I let God see me as I really am?

Let us learn from the tax collector to pray with a contrite heart, to depend on the mercy of God and to rejoice not in our merits but in grace, and in what God offers us.

And let us remember the words of Jesus that close the parable and that must serve as guidance for our Christian life:

"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

AMEN.