

***Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time***  
***October 27, 2019***

*“Oh Lord it's hard to be humble when you're perfect in every way. I can't wait to look in the mirror cause I get better looking each day. To know me is to love me. I must be a hell of a man. Oh Lord It's hard to be humble, but I'm doing the best that I can.”*

(Mac Davis 1974)

Our Lord Jesus Christ would often use examples, relative to the lives of the people of His time, to emphasize certain truths. Saint Luke records one of these instances, in today's Gospel passage, concerning the virtue of humility. We are offered a comparison of humility and pride using the example of two individuals praying in the Temple. The listeners would have understood this example because it was a common belief that “only the most devout, most observant” prayed both daily and numerous in the Temple. Although we have not had the same experiences as these people, we have had similar experiences and therefore can distinguish three lessons concerning humility and prayer from this same parable.

The first lesson could be summed up with the statement: *“The door into heaven is so low, you have to bow your head and fall upon your knees to enter.”* A person who is proud will struggle to pray. Did you notice that the prayer offered by the Pharisee was not a typical prayer? We often speak of prayer in terms of five basic forms: mental (contemplative), intercession, praise, petition (supplication), and thanksgiving. The Pharisee offers a statement of both self-justification and reassurance informing God as to why he should be heard.

The second lesson could be summed up with this statement: *“I am Third - God, others, self.”* In prayer, we never seek to lift ourselves up using the back of another. Prayer reminds us that we are a part of one united suffering, sinning, sorrowing family. We are not better than any other member of the family because of what we do or have done for God and others. This thought is an excellent remedy for the sickness of “Tribalism” which currently affects our societies.

The third lesson could be summed up with the question: *“WWJD - What would Jesus do?”* A few years ago, it seemed you could not go anywhere without seeing a tee-shirt, wrist band, hat, bumper sticker, magnet, or some other item with those four letters upon it. Whoever thought of this question has, in my opinion, struck gold. This question encapsulates the meaning of comparing one's life to the life of Jesus. We should take a moment, as we examine our actions and ask ourselves this question: what would Jesus have done in this situation as opposed to what did I do in this situation? By asking ourselves this question, we will always find some areas to improve and we will find ourselves humbly praying the same words of the tax collector: “O God, be merciful to me a sinner.”