

# Sunday Message

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice; turn to the Lord and his strength; constantly seek his face.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

**COLLECT**

Almighty ever-living God, increase our faith, hope and charity, and make us love what you command, so that we may merit what you promise. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**FIRST READING** Ecclesiasticus 35:12-14, 16-19

A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus. The Lord is a judge who is no respecter of personages. He shows no respect of personages to the detriment of a poor man, he listens to the plea of the injured party. He does not ignore the orphan's supplication, nor the widow's as she pours out her story. The man who with his whole heart serves God will be accepted, his petitions will carry to the clouds. The humble man's prayer pierces the clouds, until it arrives he is inconsolable, nor will he desist until the Most High takes notice of him, acquits the virtuous and delivers judgement. And the Lord will not be slow, nor will he be dilatory on their behalf. The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM** Psalm 32

Response: **This poor man called; the Lord heard him.**

- I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise always on my lips; in the Lord my soul shall make its boast. The humble shall hear and be glad. (R.)
- The Lord turns his face against the wicked

to destroy their remembrance from the earth. The just call and the Lord hears and rescues them in all their distress. (R.)

- The Lord is close to the broken-hearted; those whose spirit is crushed he will save. The Lord ransoms the souls of his servants. Those who hide in him shall not be condemned. (R.)

**SECOND READING** 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to Timothy. My life is already being poured away as a libation, and the time has come for me to be gone. I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith; all there is to come now is the crown of righteousness reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that Day; and not only to me but to all those who have longed for his Appearing. The first time I had to present my defence, there was not a single witness to support me. Every one of them deserted me – may they not be held accountable for it. But the Lord stood by me and gave me power, so that through me the whole message might be proclaimed for all the pagans to hear; and so I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from all evil attempts on me, and bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen. The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia! **Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for revealing the mysteries of the kingdom to mere children.** Alleluia!

**GOSPEL** Luke 18:9-14

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke. Jesus spoke the following parable to some people who prided themselves on being virtuous and despised everyone else. "Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood there and said this prayer to himself, 'I thank you, God, that I am not grasping, unjust, adulterous like the rest of mankind, and particularly that I am not like this tax collector here. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all I get.' The tax collector stood some distance away, not daring even to raise his eyes to heaven; but he beat his breast and said, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' This man, I tell you, went home again at rights with God; the other did not. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the man who humbles himself will be exalted." The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

**I believe in one God, the Father almighty,**

maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. **I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (all bow during the next three lines) and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.**

**I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Look, we pray, O Lord, on the offerings we make to your majesty, that whatever is done by us in your service may be directed above all to your glory. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

**We will ring out our joy at your saving help and exult in the name of our God.**

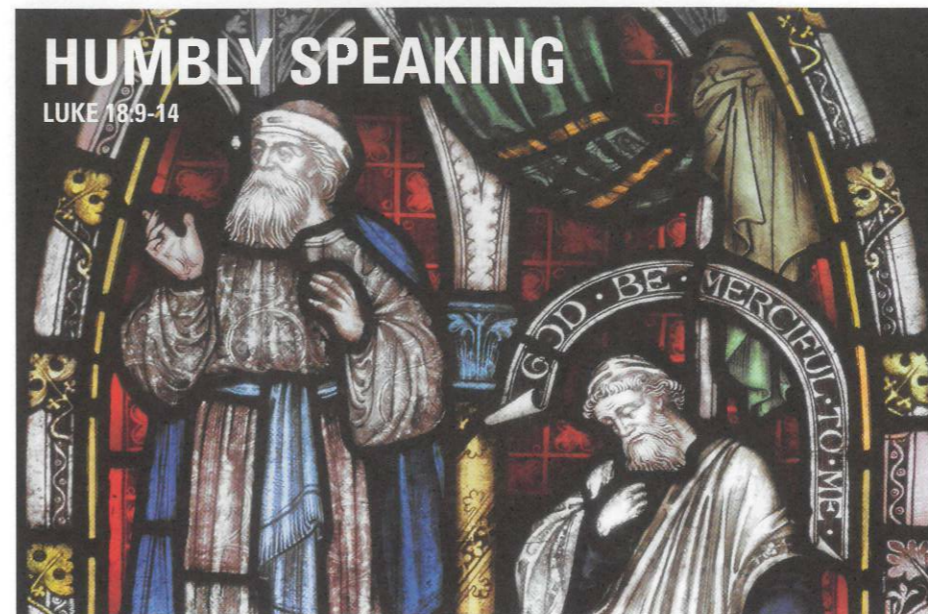
**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

May your Sacraments, O Lord, we pray, perfect in us what lies within them, that what we now celebrate in signs we may one day possess in truth. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

May the Lord support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging and a holy rest, and peace at the last.

*St John Henry Newman*

**THE WORD**



**HUMBLY SPEAKING**  
LUKE 18:9-14

You could say that this Gospel is asking a question: who prays best? Is it the professional, who knows all the techniques, or the amateur, who doesn't even trust himself to get it right?

The opening words make it clear that it is addressed to those who pride themselves on being virtuous and look down on everyone else. The characters represent the two extremes of Jewish society in the time of Jesus.

The Pharisee was the totally dedicated religious professional. Strictly speaking, the Pharisees didn't have any place in the religious hierarchy. They were a fellowship of like-minded Jews that included priests and laity but their influence came from the popular esteem they enjoyed. The Pharisee's prayer could be described as a commercial for the movement.

Tax collectors, or publicans, were at the other end of the social scale. They bought the rights to collect the taxes of their own people from the Roman occupying power. If that wasn't bad enough in a strongly nationalist society like Palestine, they made their profit by adding a percentage to the taxes for themselves. Throughout the Gospels, tax collectors are presented as outsiders, who had long ago abandoned any loyalty to their own, so that "tax collector" and "sinner" effectively means the same thing.

One might imagine Jesus' audience waiting in expectation to hear what such a person would pray for. The surprise is that, quite unconsciously, it is this person rather than the religious one who knows instinctively how to pray. He is not there to overwhelm God with a catalogue of his good deeds. Even his demeanour speaks of a humble heart: he stands barely inside the area of the Temple reserved for prayer, he keeps his eyes downcast, he strikes his breast as a sign of penitence and pleads for mercy. After his prayer, he returns home "at rights with God".

Why was the prayer of the Pharisee without effect? It was because he made the fatal mistake of comparing himself favourably with others and judging that God would not hear the prayer of the tax collector. In other words, he was playing God. Luke rounds off the parable with yet another reference to one of his favourite themes: "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the man who humbles himself will be exalted".

**PRAY**

Make the publican's prayer your own. Repeat slowly and from the heart: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

**DO**

The Pharisee looked down on the tax collector. Is there a person or group of people you look down on? What do you need to do about it?

**REFLECT**

Rabbi Lionel Blue told a humorous modern Jewish story that echoes this parable. Once, on the Day of Atonement, a man was selected to lead in his local synagogue one of the long confessional prayers that is central to that day's worship. He was not known for his piety, and the fact that he was selected didn't impress some of his critics in the congregation. As he chanted the part of the confession where it says that, on account of his sins, he is but dust and ashes, one critic nudged another and said, "Look who thinks he is dust and ashes!"

Consecrated and familiar words of prayer can sometimes lull us into a false sense of security about ourselves. That is precisely what happened to the Pharisee in the parable. He was blinded by such a false sense of his own righteousness that he failed to recognise his need of salvation. There is not a word of repentance in his prayer; it is a litany of self-congratulation from beginning to end.

Coming face to face with our sinful side is never easy. The tax collector knows he can sink no further and that if anyone is to rescue him, it can only be God, and that is what he prays for. As we think over this Gospel again, we might ask whether our prayer is closer to that of the Pharisee or the tax collector. ■

**SAY**

**Lord, I know I am far from perfect. Help me to live in a way that is pleasing to you. Amen.**

**LEARN**

The Christian has the same human weakness and sin as everyone else.

The Christian trusts in God's love and forgiveness and knows that God forgives him or her first.

