

How to pray with right attitude? 30th Sunday 2025

How do we spend our time in Church? “Why to pray? and how to pray?” We are here for Sunday Liturgy, the best form of prayer.

In our Christian Life of prayer and worship, we have two dimensions for our prayers: the Personal Prayer and Communal Prayers: Both have biblical foundations:

- a) When you pray, go to your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen...(Matt 6:6)-Personal dialogue
- b) When two or three gather in my name-for prayer- I am with them..(Matt:18:20)- Importance of communal Prayer

What attitude I should have, when I pray? This is what, through the parable of the pharisee and the tax-collector at prayer, Jesus is teaching us; that *true humility, charity, non-judgemental attitude and repentance for our sins* must be the hallmark of our prayers.

In the first reading, from wisdom of Sirach, we have a perfect companion piece to the Gospel parable. In a striking image from Sirach, the writer declares "*the prayer of **the lowly**, pierces the clouds and it will not rest until it reaches its goal*". In other words, Sirach tells us that the best prayer is *humble and selfless service*.

In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds us that God hears the prayers of those who approach Him in humility and a repentant heart. We have *two persons*, praying in the temple: the P&P. Only the prayer of one of the two was accepted. And why? What did the Pharisee do? He made too much of himself. His words were proud, and his prayer was self-exaltation and self-glory. He is telling God that he was not as evil as other people, as if God is not aware of it. (He just forgot that God sees the deepest intentions of his heart, and nothing is hidden from God's attention!)

He informed God that he is free from sin, (self-righteousness) and above all, he judged with despise and contempt the publican behind him. God did not answer the prayer of this Pharisee.

Now, look at the tax collector, and see how he came to worship God! He stood far off. He couldn't lift up his eyes to heaven, as he is repentant of his sins. Fully aware of his unworthiness, with crossed hands over his chest, his words were few and almost broken. His conduct, humble and reverent. He felt before all Holy God that he is a poor sinner, and said: "*O God, be merciful to me, a sinner,*" *This prayer* was heard because he humbled himself, acknowledging his sins, and pleaded for God's mercy.

All of us are sinners before God, and we, like the publican, therefore need to come to God, seeking His mercy. We need to overcome the Pharisee within us and revive the publican. As **St. John Newman** says: 'Everyone need to come to church, like the publican did, saying in his heart: *Lord I am not worthy to enter this sacred place! My only prayer for coming is the merit of Jesus my saviour*".

There can be occasions that someone may enter the church carelessly, sitting restless and distracted; and may become judgemental about what is happening around. Would such an attitude help them to truly encounter *the Lord in His house*?

Today, Jesus challenges us to imitate the humble publican; by acknowledging with gratitude for all our blessings; by praying for God's mercy and continued support through His grace; by asking for the strengthening of the Holy Spirit; and by becoming more sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, serving the Lord in them as best as we can. "*Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.*" Amen