



The Publican and the Pharisee Self-Righteousness vs. Humility

Much of Great Lent is an exercise in self-examination. This Sunday we consider the Gospel parable of the Publican (tax collector) and the Pharisee. (Luke 18:9-14) The early Fathers of the Church placed this passage on this day in the calendar so that we might begin to pray and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in rooting out any sins or bad attitudes that may have snuck in under the radar of our souls.

In the parable, Jesus addresses "9 ...some who were confident in their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else: 10 Two men went up to the temple, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, God I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evil doers, adulterers-or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. 13 But the tax collector stood at a distance, he would not even look up to Heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God have mercy on me a sinner.' 14 I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV), 2011)

As practicing Christians, we invest a lot of time and effort in praying, attending church, serving in church, and helping the less fortunate. We can easily get so busy that we forget to be mindful of our spirits. The enemy of our souls, endeavors to seek "whom he may devour. (1Peter 5:8). We all fall short, and this time, after the stress of the holidays, is a perfect time to begin to search out those hidden sins and attitudes, that left unchecked, can easily become much bigger problems, and hinder our abilities to fully and worthily partake of Resurrection joy.

As we pray today, let us not be like the Pharisee, whose regular, prayer, temple attendance, fasting, and tithing, gave him a sense of pride in his own good works. Let us instead be like the Publican, who being aware of his sin, simply prayed, "Lord have mercy on me a sinner."