

30TH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

Eccl 35: 12-14, 16-19

2 Tim 4: 6-8, 16-18

Luke 18: 9-14

HOMILY

In our Gospel Jesus is speaking ‘**another parable**’ but in fact with your permission allow me to be talking of Jesus telling another ‘**joke**’.

To a certain extent the word ‘**joke**’ is actually not a bad translation for today.

- We don’t tell parables anymore.
- We tell jokes, and they’re much the same thing.

Jokes and **parables** tend to be stories that look at life in **a different way**, and they can both make you “**wince**” as well as give you a “**good laugh**”. Understood in this way, you’ll appreciate that Jesus was **renowned for His jokes**,

especially jokes that had a **punch line**.

- ❖ The punchline in today’s joke is aimed at those who ‘**trusted in themselves that they were righteous and looked down on others**’.

In this joke two natural “**antagonists**” accidentally find themselves at the same location – doing the same thing: engaging in prayer out in the temple

Even if we liken this story of Jesus to a joke, it is **not** one designed to **generate laughter** but it does have a **good punch line**.

In telling the story, the real sting in this parable comes when Jesus concludes ‘**the tax collector went to his home AT RIGHTS WITH GOD and not the Pharisee!**’

“**The tax collector**” and **NOT** the “**Pharisee**” is the punch line.

- ❖ It is him who goes home AT RIGHTS WITH GOD

The term AT RIGHTS WITH GOD is a very significant expression in the New Testament.

- It refers to God’s grace towards the **undeserving sinner**.
- It is God’s grace that enables us to be at rights with Him and not our deeds. It is God’s action that puts us at right with Him

The tax Collector went home justified by God – which means this sinner went home

- ✓ a **complete** man,
- ✓ a **whole** before God,
- ✓ he went home **heard** and **loved** by God
- ✓ **accepted** and **forgiven by God**, which means ready to be accepted back **into the god-fearing community** on full and equal terms.

The Pharisee, on the other hand, ironically, goes home **still hearing himself – this is exactly the way he’d started out his day**:

Listening to himself on the way to the temple, while in the temple and out of the temple.

- ❖ His prayer leaves him unchanged!

NB: It is like some email that gets caught in the “**Divine Spam filter**”: his prayer does not get through!

The attitude of the Tax collector presents a challenge to us today.

Q: Do we dare BE LIKE the tax collector?

If anyone of us tries scratch the surface just a little bit I think we will find that there is a Pharisee in all of us.

Reading this Gospel the other day, I found myself disgusted with the prayer of the pharisee saying to myself inwardly: “**Thank God I am not like this pharisee.**”

- ❖ There is a big temptation to mask our sinfulness and to hide it under a series of layers of the good deeds we do.

Like the Pharisee our attitudes can be full of displays

- attending Mass // keeping holy days,
- praying the rosary or other special prayers,
- being active and pretty much involved at the at parish etc.

This is not what Jesus would have us dwell on.

He longs to touch our wounds and warts and all.

Q: Can we empty our cups (of great deed) and invite him in as the Tax Collector: “**God be merciful to me, a sinner**”?