

### 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Perseverance in prayer was the theme of last weekend's liturgy. Today we reflect on the need for humility in prayer. Jesus spoke very often of the need for prayer. He makes it very clear that prayer is absolutely necessary if we are to follow him. St. John Paul II said, "For me prayer is the first priority. It is the basic prerequisite to service of the Church and the world. Every believer should always think of prayer as an essential and indispensable component of one's vocation." We need prayer as much as we need food to eat and air to breath. Without prayer we cannot hope to follow Christ in the world. Therefore, the devil constantly tries to keep us from praying, giving us superficial excuses. The devil convinces us that we don't have to go to Mass on Sunday because we are helping out at community kitchen or SVDP or Habitat for Humanity or we are just too tired. The devil makes you think that it is rude to leave your visiting relatives or friends at home and go to Mass or prayer. It is not rude. It is not impolite. We need to show our visiting relatives and friends that God comes first in our lives, and we love them no less because we go to Church. Maybe your example would make them reflect on where they stand in relationship with God. Do not be ashamed of that. If you are ashamed to acknowledge God, God will be ashamed of us when we stand before his throne. Your friends and relatives will not be hurt or offended if you leave them alone for an hour or hour and a half. Instead they will esteem you. They will appreciate you for your conviction and faith. That will make them think of their own priorities in life.

I have heard many saying, "Oh I wish my children would come back to Church. I wish my grandchildren were baptized." We will continue to hear it unless we change our ways, unless we get rid of our politically correct behavior. God should come first. The constant danger that we all of us face is that we become so immersed in the work of the Lord that we neglect the Lord of the work. All that we achieve by sacrificing our prayer life is worthless. We must find time—we must make time—to be with the Lord in prayer. Prayer is as indispensable for us today as yesterday.

Soon we will be in the month of November. It is the month when we specially remember and pray for our loved ones who have gone before us. The best form of prayer is to offer a Mass for them. If you wish to do that in the month of November, I have an insert in the bulletin. The Masses for those intentions will be said by the priests belonging to my religious order in India. The stipend you offer will go to the education of the seminarians whose training I was in charge of before I came over to this country.

In the Gospel of today, Jesus narrates the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Both of them went up to the temple area to pray. But the Pharisee did not pray. He just talked to himself and informed God about his goodness. He told God how self-righteous he was. He gave thanks to God for his own rectitude. He compared his upright behavior with that of the tax collector and condemned him in prayer. But the tax collector stood far off and said a prayer that came from the depth of his heart: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

This parable teaches us that it is not enough that we pray, but our prayer should be full of humility. The tax collector expressed his humility and unworthiness—he stood far off—he did

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not raise his eyes to heaven and beat his breast saying his prayer. In our prayer, we need to acknowledge our sinfulness, our unworthiness, and our nothingness. The tax collector went home justified because he prayed with humility and trust. In the first reading we heard, "The prayer of the humble pierced the clouds; it does not rest till it reaches its goal." Jesus reminds us today that humility should be the foundation of our prayer. Let us never neglect prayer. Let us pray with humility and trust.